Zines Face Off Against Trump and the New Fascism

brokenpencil

THE MAGAZINE OF ZINE CULTURE AND THE INDEPENDENT ARTS

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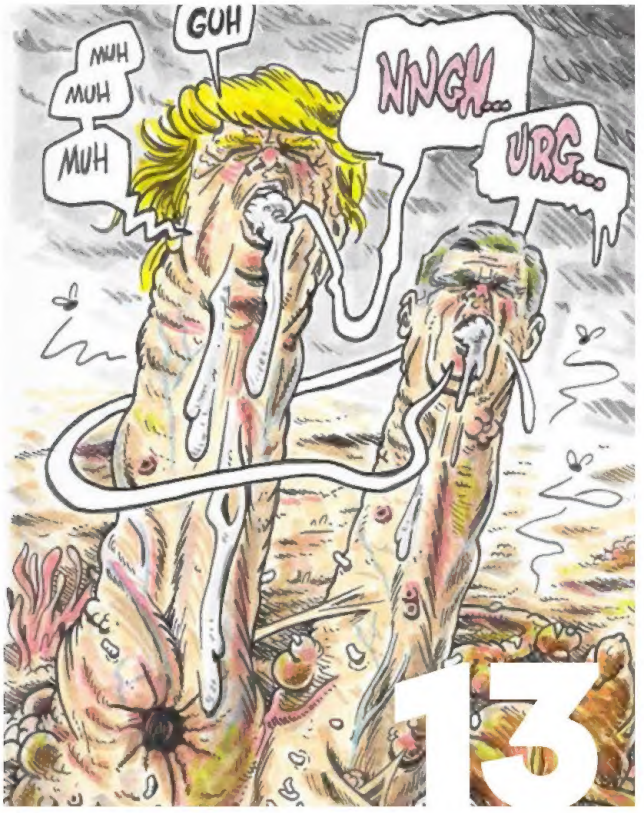

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Artwork *Broken Pencil* encourages submissions of artwork to be considered for use in our folio showcase of independent artists. Please send proposals to art@brokenpencil.com. If you would like to become a regular illustrator for *Broken Pencil*, please send a letter and samples of your work to editor@brokenpencil.com.

Fiction *Broken Pencil* accepts submissions of short fiction (50–2,000 words) between February 1st and September 15th, and for Indie Writers' Deathmatch between September 16th and December 21st. For more information visit brokenpencil.com/submissions.

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Contributors

Faith Arkorful is the new Associate Fiction Editor of *Broken Pencil*. She was the second place winner in the 2016 running for the HHLLC prose contest and the first runner-up in *Echolocation*'s 2013 'The Chase' chapbook contest. She has an upcoming story in *Little Brother Magazine*. She lives in Toronto.

Markus 'Star' Harwood-Jones (Zine Philosophy, pg 64) is a queer, mad, white, trans, settler, author, illustrator, documentarian, space-case and day-dreamer who works towards justice building artistic projects and communities focused around healing and love. Star is currently pursuing an undergraduate degree in Sociology, at Ryerson, where they also were a founder of the Trans Collective. Visit them online at **starkisscreations.com**.

Natalie Wee's book, *OUR BODIES & OTHER FINE MACHINES*, will be published by Words Dance publishing this year. She is currently an Associate Fiction Editor at *Broken Pencil* Magazine, as well as a Cultural Studies & Critical Theory MA Candidate at McMaster University. You may find more works and a complete list of her publications at her website, **wondersmith.co.vu.**

2017: GET TOUGHER

As I write this, we're a couple days out from the Women's March on Washington, which drew more than one million protesters all over the world on January 21, taking to the streets to protest that orange menace depicted so perfectly by Patrick Sparrow on our cover. I marched in the Toronto offshoot of this event amongst 60,000 other people. It was beautiful and inspiring and hopeful, and also irritating (sorry, I cannot deal with those knitted pink hats!) and on a deeper level, frustrating and alienating for POCs, for trans women, for disabled folk and for Indigenous activists. You can read far better pieces explaining all these issues (and you probably already have!) all over the web, so I'll spare you the soapbox. In short — the march was great, but it's time to really get to work. Our first act of anti-Trump resistance at Broken Pencil is this issue.

Bidding farewell to 2016. (photo by Matt Lang)

Firstly though — some nice news! I'm a dingus and have not mentioned some super-important changes in our *Broken Pencil* community! Longtime associate fiction editor Colin Brush has taken the reigns as head fiction editor. Colin is smart and savvy and good at so many different things, plus he's just delightful! So I'm happy to have him around more. We've also hired two new associate fiction editors: Natalie Wee and Faith Arkorful. You can see their estimable achievements listed in the masthead. We are so happy to have these cool, talented women making our fiction section better all the time. Welcome!

And now (drumroll)...more crappy stuff! Toronto's cherished and long-running DIY venue Soybomb is also closing down. Jason Wydra of Soybomb confirmed to AUX that the venue was reported to the fire marshall in an operation within the online conservative troll hole known as 4chan. 4chan users have been working to police and report DIY venues all over cities in North America, using the devastating fire at the Ghost Ship artist collective in Oakland, CA last December as their launching point. This is beyond terrifying — a trickle-down effect of the empowerment of the U.S. alt-right under Trump's rallying call. It is awful to perceive of these spaces — once considered safe spaces for marginalized indiviudals to enjoy and create music and art — being systemically attacked. What can we do? It's been suggested that those of us who attend and report on these scenes operate with extra caution in our coverage. Seeing as DIY artists and spaces are part of our bread and butter here at *Broken Pencil*, it's something we are debating and thinking closely about, and we welcome your feedback on how we can do a better job at protecting these spaces (email me! editor@brokenpencil.com). In the meantime, we're trying to focus on the artists and communities who are struggling and working to continue their practices in an environment that is increasingly difficult in 2017 for a variety of reasons beyond 4chan. In our secondary feature, *The Hustle* (pg 20) Suzanne Alyssa Andrew has surveyed a variety of artists working in a variety of disciplines, working and living and trying to survive across Canada in cities that are growing increasingly pricey and inhospitable to all sorts of people (not just artists). Some of them have day jobs and some don't. Some get grants and some don't. Everyone seems to be working super hard and making great art despite the increasingly stacked odds in our stupid, expensive Canadian cities. It's an inspiring piece that shows that if you have an imperative to make art, you can do it! We just have to be more crafty and wily - and above all, we have to remain determined and mindful of supporting and stepping up for each other. We've always been tough. Let's get tougher.

Alison Lang

Our email inbox at Broken Pencil is a consistent site of hilarity, a bog of eternal stench and a source of joy, as well as rage blackouts. If you ask us to do a story about Girls Gone Wild, we WILL send your email around and make fun of it. Similarly, if you send an email about being a DJ, it's pretty likely we'll share it on Twitter. Them's the breaks!

Creative Nonfiction Query Inbox x

[redacted] Nov 25

to me

Dear Broken Pencil:

I wrote a 5,000-word, no-punches-held account of my stint as a *Girls Gone Wild* Tour Supervisor in 2004. It's a 100% true Coming of Age/Fish out of Water story that gives unseen access to a tour, races along like a movie, and ultimately proves that there's no such thing as a dream job.

You could also make a case for this to be a second, "secret" subtitle: "How a socially-inept, mentally-ill person fell into a fortune... and then pissed it all away."
(Referring to GGW owner Joe Francis.)

GGW may not be as relevant as it was but what makes it relevant is the heart and message the account sends and that I've (I'm the "I" in the story) since gone on to do some pretty cool things.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki[redacted]

Thanks!

--
Sincerely,

[redacted]

Alison Lang <editor@brokenpencil.com> Nov 28

to [redacted]

Hi [redacted]

Thanks for the pitch but we have absolutely no interest in anything Girls Gone Wild adjacent. If you want to learn more about our magazine and what we publish, visit our website at brokenpencil.com.

A

--
Alison Lang
Editor
Broken Pencil

[redacted] Nov 28

to me

Thanks, Alison.

Honest question: if, say, someone like Cameron Crowe approached you with an essay he'd written about Girls Gone Wild, what would be your response?

Sent from my iPhone

counterculture/controversial Inbox x Issue 74/letters misc

[redacted]

to me

Hello Broken Pencil hope you'll find time to listen

https://soundcloud.com/hbspacecraft/oldyeller

[redacted]

to me

suck a tit!!!!

im a DJ!!!!

https://soundcloud.com/hbspacecraft/sets/naive/s-GXJ91

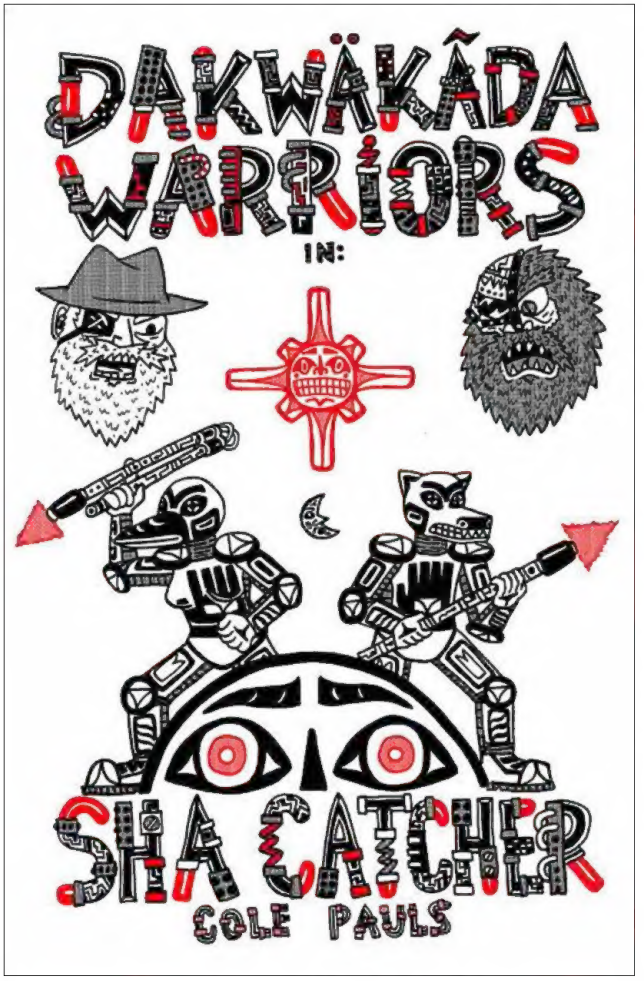
https://twitter.com/LEVIATHANCLUB

assistant editor Nov 28

to me, Hal, Colin

From Pizza Punks to Native Power Rangers:

Cole Pauls' Dakwakada Warriors



Since 2012, Vancouver comics artist Cole Pauls has made a name for himself drawing punks fiending for pizza. The aptly-named *Pizza Punks* strips have been collected in a few zines, were serialized in the free newspaper published by Vancouver store Lucky's Comics and led to Pauls being interviewed by Nardwuar.

Last fall, Pauls, who is Tahltan First Nation and grew up in a Southern Tutchone-speaking community in the Yukon, released a badass superhero comic paying tribute to his Indigenous heritage, titled *Dakwakada Warriors in: Sha Catcher*. Pauls says he always wanted to mix his Indigenous heritage with comics and made his first foray with a two-pager about a Southern Tuchone superstition as a student at Emily Carr University. In the same class, Pauls encountered a moment of ignorance in relation to his work and cultural background. "I also did a four-page auto bio comic about my first critique when a white lady with dreads asked me: 'How does it feel to be a white male appropriating a culture you're not a part of?' and I had to explain to her I was Tahltan First Nations and that there is such thing as a light-skinned native person," Pauls remembers. It's moments like these that cement the importance of a comic like *Dakwakada Warriors* as a teachable tool.

The story draws inspiration from a Pacific Northwest Coast legend featuring a Raven saving the sun to help protect the earth. As such, the titular Warriors wear wolf and raven power suits and fight to save the sha (sun) and nan (earth) from two cyborg villians (a Sasquatch and an evil colonial pioneer). As the two "Native Power Rangers" (in Pauls' words) fight to save the world, they speak a mix of English and the Southern Tutchone language, with the typical "kick!" and "pow!" comic battle sound effects appearing in translation. It's awesome! To order *Dakwakada Warriors,* email Pauls at **tundrawizard@gmail.com**. (Alison Lang)

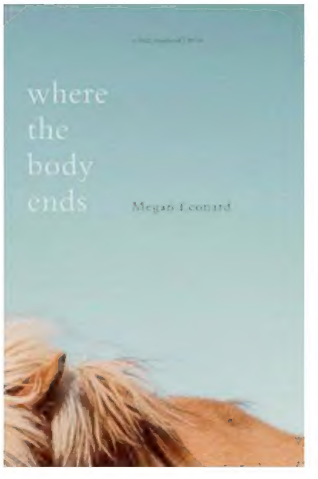
STAFF PICK: Platypus Press

Platypus Press is a boutique press based in England with a well selected curation of voices from around the globe, both new and established. There's a lot of cool things taking place here! Their quarterly online literary journal, *Wildness*, demonstrates a delicate attention to language.

Their most recent issue, the aptly titled *Echoes*, demonstrates this quality with poetry and prose that evokes in imagery, style, and inclusivity, the opportunity for new beginnings, the idea of exposing what was previously masked. You almost get the sense that every word is carefully curated at Platypus.

In 2016, Platypus released *2412* — a series of micro-chapbooks published daily until the 24th of December for free. Don't let the length of these micro-chapbooks fool you: these tiny works are to be savoured. Print them and take them on the go! There are instructions on how to fold them for maximum portability on their website. Additionally, their website has an online catalogue of items available for sale, which include the limited edition hand-bound anthology *The Quieting*. And if you're looking for something to look forward to in the new year, be on the watch for *The Wilds*, a daily section coming to the press January 2017.

Faith Arkorful is an associate fiction editor at Broken Pencil.



STAFF PICK:

Red Rising Magazine

Lots of people set out to make magazines, comp zines, and other forms of alternative and political publishing. That's our lifeblood here at *Broken Pencil*, and we do our best to keep tabs on all of the self-published and independent projects we can. As an editor at *BP*, a zine fair organizer, and a zinester myself, I've seen a lot of amazing stuff, and zines have long been a part of my political awareness. But I have to say, the folks behind Winnipeg-based Red Rising are making a magazine that consistently blows me away, and I was super stoked to meet them and have them table at Canzine Central last year.

The magazine brings together work by Indigenous creators and writers across Canada, and as a white/settler reader I feel really grateful that the mag allows me to plug into conversations and and some really incredible work that I may never have accessed otherwise. But it also offers entry points for political organizing and for what solidarity can look like. Most importantly, it insists that poetry, art and tradition not only can, but must be at the centre of an indigenous movement in Canada and throughout the world. The magazine has four issues so far, and they're all available on their webstore for suggested donation prices. Do yourself a favor and check them out.

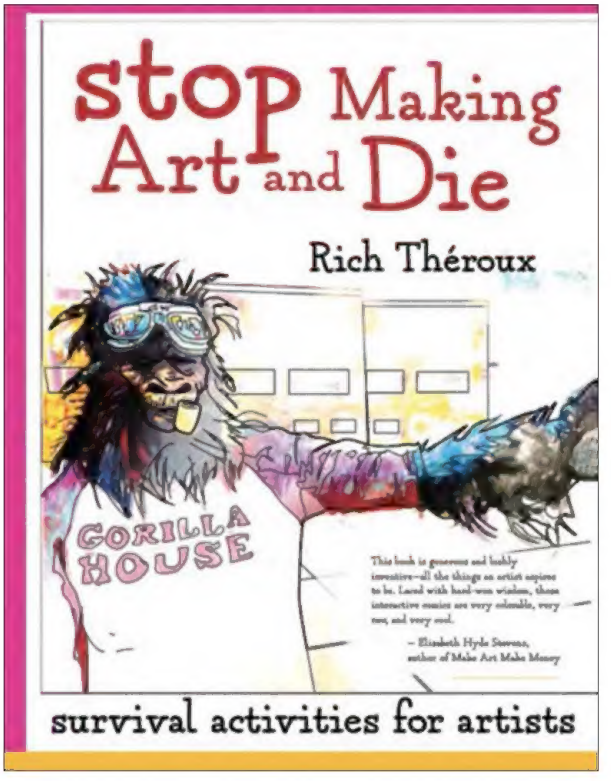
Jonathan Valelly is the assistant editor of Broken Pencil.

Stop Making Art and Die:

An activity book on building a community art co-op

In 2012, Calgary-based artist Rich Theroux was stagnating. Though he had a successful day job as an art teacher at a high school, he hadn't made art of his own for nearly a decade. After a period of frantic self-searching and brainstorming, he decided to open up a collaborative community art space — a place where artists and art-lovers of all skill levels could hang out, create, learn and sell their work. His new book *Stop Making Art and Die* tracks the long and difficult process building the space, now known in its newest incarnation as Rumble House. The book also serves as instructional activity and colouring book on how to re-engage with art and creativity. It contains everything from guides on writing a solid artist's statement to art-making instructionals on designing vectors and shading, to more simplistic writing and art prompts: "Write a poem, kill it and re-animate it," reads one page.

"We tell stories and this (format) was a great way to lock down the story," Theroux says. And it is a great story — full of inspiration and error, triumph and tragedy. Theroux is open about the financial struggles and hours of labour the space required, and the outcomes that come from this type of risk; he lost his house, his first marriage dissolved, the deaths of community members and the crushing disappointment of learning his landlord has sold the building. Above all, the book serves as an invigorating reminder of how we should view art-making in 2016: it's not a hobby — it's an imperative, essential for our health and the health of our communities. "The passage of time was always make or break, live or die," Theroux says. "So it was easy to pick out the parts of the narrative that were life and death." (Alison Lang)



ART HOLES

Creators diagram where they work

Andrea Lukic's ghost world

Andrea Lukic is a Vancouver-based artist, zinemaker and musician.

"(When drawing) I feel like a time travelling coroner, and I speak to all kinds of ghosts and juries and see different pockets of history," she says. "Somebody recently told me it's like a map of a memory; I'm trying to remember a bad thing that happened. Lots of characters are reappearing, and the symbols are lifted from the mythology of my dreams which I have been documenting.

"My desk currently has a music box, crystals from a friend who passed away, a big ceramic poodle, a lamp with a red bulb and a photograph of a farmer from the Great Depression crying after the first rainfall. Although I always work alone in the physical world (I've never been able to share a studio), I work from anywhere private. But I'm a Gemini so I'm never lonely. I always have a disagreeable version of myself to talk down from a personal conspiracy." **lukicandrea.tumblr.com**

THE SMELL OF OUR OWN

Artist Interviews Artist

Glockabelle Speaks with Shelby Monita

GLOCKABELLE IS ANNABELLE CAZES, a New York City-based musician who gets audiences sweating and dancing with two Casios, a drum machine and of course her glockenspiel. We first met in New York about four years ago when I was traveling across America by train. Annabelle and I have been friends ever since and I have made it my mission to spread the word about her energetic, Hello Kitty-cute music that is in a genre all its own. Listen at **glockabelle.com.**

I have been trying to label your genre of music but am having a hard time with it. How do you describe it?

I think given how my live show is currently, I would call it synth punk. Some have also called it noise punk with a mix of prog rock, experimental rock, French synth pop...it's really all of those genres rolled into one. I am currently performing totally solo with just my two Casios and a 1982 Yamaha drum machine and my glockenspiel. It's a minimalist race against the machine.

You play the glockenspiel with thimbles on your fingers. One question, why?

The glockenspiel thimble technique is something I came up with when my mom mailed the glock to me while I was living in Paris and I had no mallets. I devised a way to play with my hands, which made sense for me since I was trained as a classical pianist. Playing the glock with my fingers makes it possible for me to play melodies and harmonies at the same time. The glock is usually used as an ornamental instrument in most musical arrangements. My technique allows me to make it a lead instrument.

Do people ever get confused when you say you play the glock?

Ha! No I think most of the time they get it and don't assume I'm playing a gun or otherwise :)

Where you do get your creative spark from? Is it from other bands or maybe even from your own imagination?

Oh definitely from my imagination which runs rampant! But I think what sparks my imagination most is actual movement. I love taking long walks around NYC, jogging to my favorite tunes... these days I've been listening to some old school rap like that of Roxanne Shanté, Queen Latifah, old school reggae like Lady Ann and Sister Nancy, this surf rock band called The Atlantics and then there is the 80s punk band Surbuban Lawns which I adore.

I also listen to quite a bit of 80s French electronic music such as Lio, Elli et Jacno and Telex and 1960s French yé-yé pop.

The French yé-yé pop really comes out in your fashion style. What is your song writing process?

There really is no process. I get inspired by an idea and just sit on my bed with my Casio, turn on some beats and bang out some melodies until something sticks.

You recently got a pet bird named Jacques Cousteau that you have been posting videos of on your Instagram. Any chance he will make an appearance on your new work?

Ha! I actually recorded my last bird (who passed last year) over some hip-hop beats... but this new bird is only six months old and sings like he's practicing for Juilliard! I think he will definitely be making an appearance, on my record and possibly also onstage. I'm not sure how keen he is on fast beats. He's more of a jazz crooner. Loves Ella Fitzgerald and Chet Baker.

Shelby Monita is a Toronto-based writer and zine author. Her zines include *Hoser Punx* and *Artificial Life in the Market Place*. Shelby has written for *Weird Canada, Spindle Magazine, Long Winter, The Punk Site* and more. You can find her portfolio at **shelbymonita.squarespace.com.**

POWER UP:
Indie Gaming and Identity

Heartbeat for Barney

by Al Donato

Often, the act of creation is a conduit for catharsis. It's why Tammy Duplantis made *Heartbeat For Barney*, a game tribute for her friend who passed away last September.

Load up and you're greeted with a great grey expanse, interrupted by three humming lines moving forever right. They loop once they hit an edge, like a lifeline monitor grafted to an Etch A Sketch. You can move up and down, but you can never go backwards nor stop the lines from singing. This is Barney's heartbeat immortalized as drone music.

A Baton Rouge artist now based in California, Duplantis and Barney Canson bonded over a love for music and guitar blues. She describes him as someone sincerely kind, who would make an effort to tell others he liked their company. To commemorate Canson, Duplantis and other musical friends staged a 24-hour drone music marathon at a university chapel. Her instrument of choice was the Game Boy; on it, a prototype for *Heartbeat for Barney*.

Duplantis was drawn to the Game Boy — an almost 30-year console, largely obsolete — because of its limitations and physicality. With three notes and a white noise filter, she found herself wanting to push what it was capable of.

"Now that it isn't a shiny new tool, when people see one and play with them, it brings back more of consciousness. They think about the fact that they're playing a game," she says.

This mindful gameplay synchronizes with drone music, a genre known for its unending tones. A tinnitus-like ringing encircles Barnye's heartbeat, which in itself emits a motor purr when lines drag up or down. As the player listens to his heartbeat, the frequencies reveal multitudes; a song that is both funeral chant and rejoicing hymn. This is how Duplantis says goodbye and hello to Barney at the same time.

Heartbeat for Barney conceptualizes grief as something that can be transferred from maker to player; the playfulness of the medium cuts through the usual decorum of the mourning process, and demands that the player engage with the feelings experienced by the creator during the development process. Barney's heartbeat doesn't seek an appropriate response or a pithy consoling statement. There isn't a right way to interact, just as there is no right way to mourn.

In response to another friend's death, Duplantis had made a previous game that was cathartic, but evoked helplessness and a downward spiral. With *Heartbeat For Barney*, she hoped to instead capture the essence of what made him caring and beloved.

Since grief is something carried within us forever, it makes sense that Duplantis put the onus for closure on the player.

"I thought for a long time how to end it [the game]. I couldn't. So I put that on the player. At some point you need to walk away from this," she says. "I can't stop it ... it's up to you how to end the heartbeat." Download *Heartbeat for Barney* at **deltagardner.itch.io/heartbeat-for-barney.**

The Beguiling has moved!

Yes, the rumours are true.

On the eve of their 30th Anniversary, **The Beguiling Books & Art**, Canada's Finest Purveyor of comics, graphic novels, and zines has packed up shop and moved!

Starting January 3rd, 2017, you'll find The Beguiling at 319 College Street, between Spadina and Augusta at the top of Kensington Market, and as always online 24/7 at **beguiling.ca**.

The Beguiling is also the **Founding Sponsor of TCAF: The Toronto Comic Arts Festival**, and helped TCAF open up a shop too! **Page & Panel: The TCAF Shop** is located in Toronto Reference Library, 789 Yonge Street. Check them out for great comics, zines, prints, apparel and merch and much more!

The Beguiling would like to offer its sincere thanks to Broken Pencil and the indy comics, zine, art, and DIY community for 30 years of support. Here's to another 30 great years!

The Beguiling

The Beguiling - *New Location!*
319 College Street (At Spadina)
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5T 1S2
416-533-7313 | @thebeguiling
beguiling.ca

PAGE & PANEL THE TCAF SHOP

Page & Panel: The TCAF Shop
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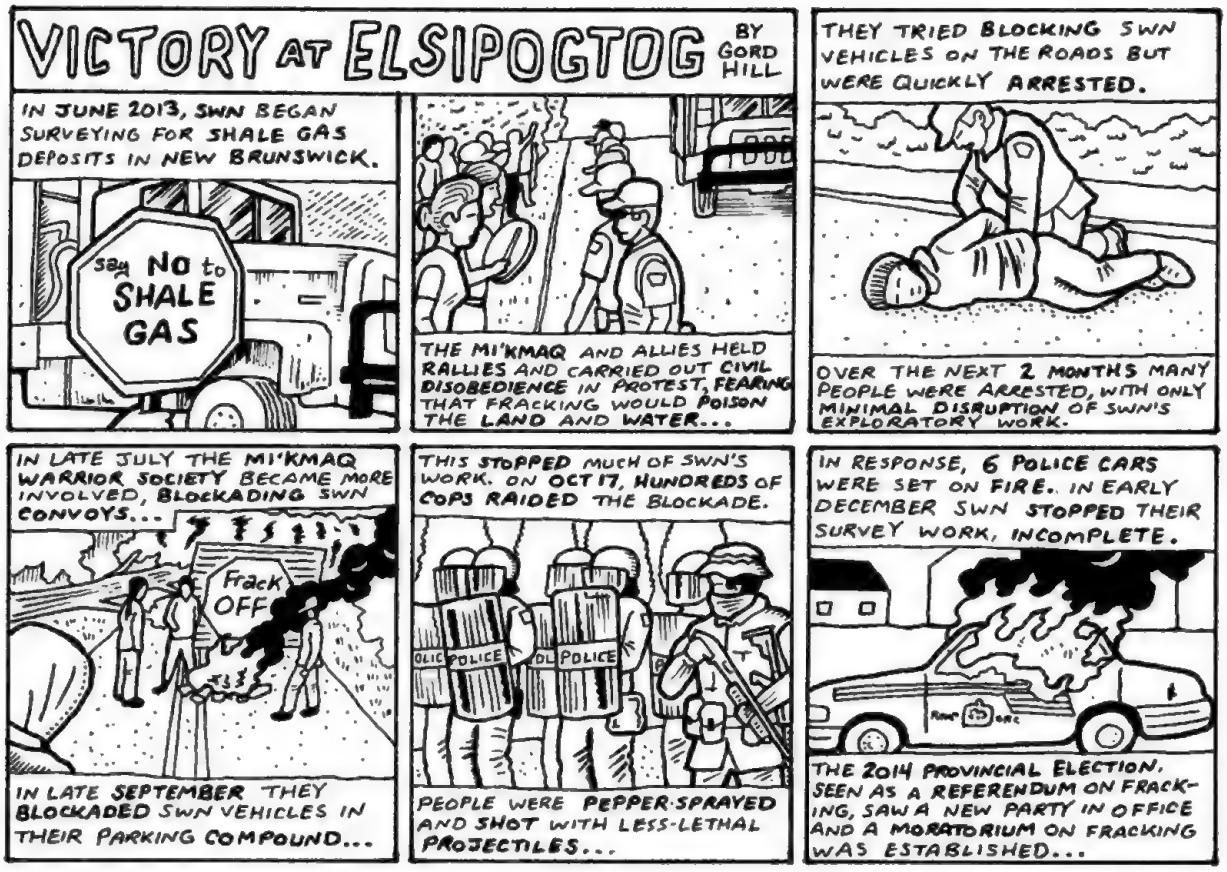
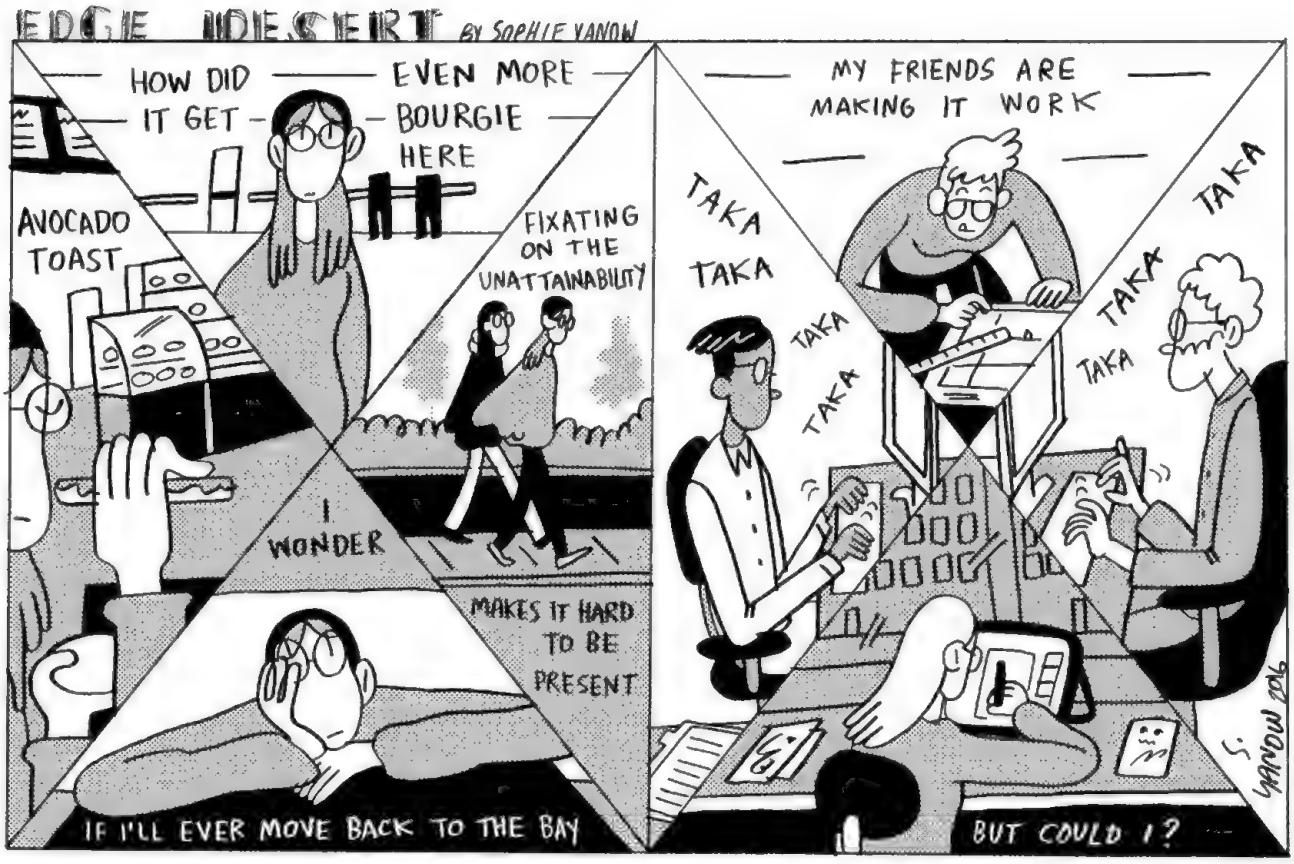
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4W 2G8
416-323-9212 | @tcafshop
tcafshop.com

beguiling.ca


VICTORY AT ELSIPOGTOG
BY GORD HILL
IN JUNE 2013, SWN BEGAN SURVEYING FOR SHALE GAS DEPOSITS IN NEW BRUNSWICK.
say NO to SHALE GAS
THE MI'KMAQ AND ALLIES HELD RALLIES AND CARRIED OUT CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE IN PROTEST, FEARING THAT FRACKING WOULD POISON THE LAND AND WATER...
THEY TRIED BLOCKING SWN VEHICLES ON THE ROADS BUT WERE QUICKLY ARRESTED.
OVER THE NEXT 2 MONTHS MANY PEOPLE WERE ARRESTED, WITH ONLY MINIMAL DISRUPTION OF SWN'S EXPLORATORY WORK.
IN LATE JULY THE MI'KMAQ WARRIOR SOCIETY BECAME MORE INVOLVED, BLOCKADING SWN CONVOYS...
Frack OFF
IN LATE SEPTEMBER THEY BLOCKADED SWN VEHICLES IN THEIR PARKING COMPOUND...
THIS STOPPED MUCH OF SWN'S WORK. ON OCT 17, HUNDREDS OF COPS RAIDED THE BLOCKADE.
POLICE
PEOPLE WERE PEPPER-SPRAYED AND SHOT WITH LESS-LETHAL PROJECTILES...
IN RESPONSE, 6 POLICE CARS WERE SET ON FIRE. IN EARLY DECEMBER SWN STOPPED THEIR SURVEY WORK, INCOMPLETE.
THE 2014 PROVINCIAL ELECTION, SEEN AS A REFERENDUM ON FRACKING, SAW A NEW PARTY IN OFFICE AND A MORATORIUM ON FRACKING WAS ESTABLISHED...

BABCIA
A papercut story by Marta Chudolinska
My father succeeded in the end. We moved to Canada and all of these childhood absences were mended.
Except for one
A few of my aunts, uncles, and cousins immigrated around the same time as us, but Babcia stayed in Poland with the remainder of our family.
A loss to prepare for all future losses.


EDGE IDESCENT BY SOPHIE YANOW
HOW DID IT GET EVEN MORE BOURGIE HERE
AVOCADO TOAST
FIXATING ON THE UNATTAINABILITY
I WONDER
MAKES IT HARD TO BE PRESENT
IF I'LL EVER MOVE BACK TO THE BAY
MY FRIENDS ARE MAKING IT WORK
TAKA
TAKA
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TAKA
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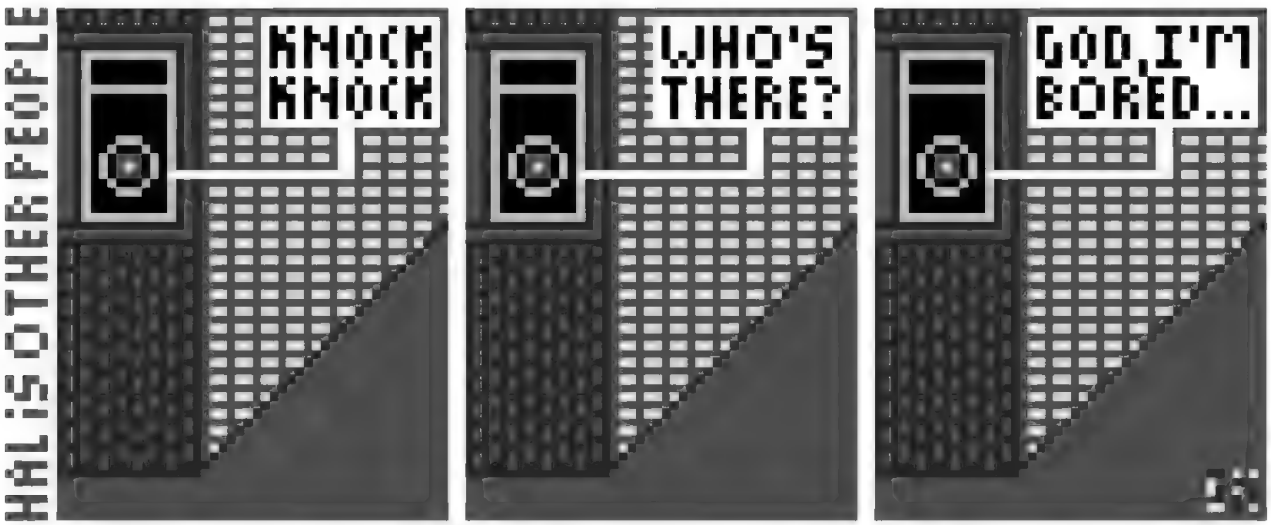
BUT COULD I?
YANOW 2016


HAL IS OTHER PEOPLE
KNOCK KNOCK
WHO'S THERE?
GOD, I'M BORED...

NASTY ZINESTERS FIGHT BACK!

Coping with a Donald Trump world through art and outrage

Edited by Alison Lang

Featuring Cory, Aaron Lange, Jason Luther, Alana Mohamed, Hal Niedzviecki, and Jonathan Valelly

HOW DOES ONE REACT when the rug is pulled out from under you? When an orangey reality-show businessman — a *bad* businessman — a racist, a xenophobe, a misogynistic hateful troll has assumed control of the world's most powerful country? Like everyone else, we've scrolled through thinkpiece after thinkpiece until our eyes dried like prunes in their sockets, trying to figure out how the hell this happened, and how the hell to parse it. We've read myriad suggestions from people far smarter than ourselves about how to think, how to act, how to feel. It's ok to be furious, it's ok to be anxious, it's ok to be scared. It's our imperative right now to feel, to think and to act when we are ready. It's imperative to take care of ourselves and our friends and those who need support and allies. It's most important of all to keep making art that explores these complications and provides a mouthpiece for our rage and helplessness. We have profiled several folks who have made anti-Trump zines and comics, and our staffers have contributed some essays of their own. We hope these pieces will offer some comfort, or at very least, something to think about as the world heads into yet another political dark age. (Alison Lang)

AMONG THE MOST RIDICULOUS warnings about the Trump presidency is that we can't allow the Trump phenomenon to become 'normal'. Alas, I take a pretty dim view of humanity. For me, blowhard demagogues who get rich and powerful with their daddy's money then use that money and power to get more power (and money) are as normal (and American) as apple pie and hand guns. The ascendancy of Trump and his lizard cabinet of billionaire cronies is yet another lesson in the banality of evil as channeled through the conformity and passivity of the hyper-mediated crowd. In a modern age that brought us Hiroshima, Hitler and many other capital H horrors, Trump's normalcy should no more be questioned than his legitimacy. Might makes right; it always has and it always will.

I have also heard people saying that Trump's election will be a good thing for independent and underground culture. Their reasoning is that the denizens of zine culture will be at the forefront of the opposition. We will be more important than ever. It's always nice to feel needed, but I don't buy that argument either. Donald Trump backlash isn't exactly on the fringe. When hating the orange one puts you in the same company as every New York Times columnist, every Bush, every Clinton and every Silicon Valley Richie-rich with a conscience (note: Elon Musk does not have a conscience), it's time to rethink the idea that you're on the vanguard of the opposition.

TO TRUMP, TRUMP, MAKE ZINES, NOT WAR

by Hal Niedzviecki

But that doesn't mean I'm letting you off easy. Doctors on the frontlines would probably rather be diagnosing pneumonias then sawing off legs shattered by land mines. Zinesters would probably rather be writing about their latest breakup or crappy wage-slave job than confronting the disturbing notion that the president of America hates not just them (it was always thus) but also the platform of rights and freedoms that make 'them' possible. We're not on the vanguard, we're not an important part of a nascent protest movement, but we do have a duty.

Our duty is to what's left of our communities. Trump's election shows just how shattered and fragmented we are as a social unit. It should be way harder for a con artist who became famous for hosting a mildly diverting reality TV show peddling a fantasy of upward mobility to take the presidency. We can blame the deer-in-the-self-driving-car's-headlights media or a bunch of Schlitz guzzling good old boys on welfare in some hellish swing-state we've already forgotten the name of, but really we only have ourselves to blame.

What have you done lately to break out of your bubble? To strengthen your community? To spread the gospel of free expression in the only form it truly exists — as independent media? Trump is a consequence of our own passivity. If nothing else, Trump's mockery of an election teaches us that a Facebook profile isn't a voice. Liking a link isn't making yourself heard. We have to get out there and make sure that as many people as possible see that there are other ways to talk to each other, to themselves, to strangers and friends. The issue isn't what kind of politics people have, it's that they feel like they should bother having a politics. If a vote is cast and it doesn't matter because the winner ends up being the loser (and a loser) did that voter get heard? There has to be a better way; there is a better way. It's the zine culture way, in which we empower people to believe that they and their communities matter.

So over the next four years, yes, it's important to keep making stuff. It's important to keep making stuff that trashes Trump. But it's even more important to make zines about the people you talk to on the bus; go to a school and teach kids how to make mini-zines about their favourite candy bars; make a comic about a part of your city you've never been to then hand it out in that area. The community garden and zine making space you start in the abandoned back alley around the corner will have more of an impact in your community than ten thousand #dumptrump tweets. Sure, we want to dump the orange-haired molester-in-chief and his freaky robo-blonde children, but that's not going to happen by trashing Trump. What matters is that you are doing everything you can to spread the ideas of zine culture, and the values of an independent not-for-profit media. The best opposition to Trump is to break through the barriers, build connections and communities, and make your tiny sliver of the world great again.

Hal Niedzviecki is the founder and publisher of *Broken Pencil* magazine. His latest books are *Trees On Mars: Our Obsession with the Future,* and *The Archaeologists: A Novel.*

Aaron Lange's HUGE

A violent comic skewering of a piss-poor president

IT'S HARD to think of the right adjective to describe the work of Philadelphia-based alt-comics legend Aaron Lange. Words like "pornographic," "ribald" and "transgressive" come close but feel insufficient when one looks at Lange's art, which pushes up so furiously and fearlessly against social and cultural boundaries that they burst apart, oozing all kinds of unimaginable fluids. Following the presidential election results, Lange spent the day in bed and then went downstairs and began to draw. The result is *HUGE*, a published sketchbook of Trump artwork, and it's a nightmarish, grotesque, disgusting, hilarious and darkly cathartic tour-de-force. We asked Lange a few questions about the comic over email.

BP: I think a lot of Trump parody art needs to step up its game to reflect the gravity of the situation. HUGE definitely does this really well and reflects so much of the vitriol in my own heart. What was the process like as you began to draw? Did these ideas just pour out of you?

AL: Donald Trump is not funny and he never was. He makes a vulgarian like Howard Stern seem erudite by comparison. Trump is a bully with a potty mouth, not a clever class clown. The weak tea we are served from newspaper cartoons, Saturday Night Live, even internet memes, none seemed to be addressing the sheer obscenity of the man and his anti-movement. The hardest bleakest satire seemed, to me, the only response. I think there is a similar sentiment and style expressed in the novel *American Psycho*. Of course, Donald Trump comes from the same disgusting world as the fictional Patrick Bateman. My illustrations are to "political cartoons" what Hieronymus Bosch is to religious painting.

Has the production of the comic offered any sort of catharsis, or not really?

Yeah, attacking Trump and his lazy followers who are so easily bamboozled and hoodwinked... it's not my idea of a pleasant Sunday afternoon. I'd much rather be researching the esoteric corners of the Cleveland punk scene in the 70s. But I felt a duty to respond, no matter how humble my efforts. I wanted a record of it, like Otto Dix's revulsion towards the decadence of the Weimar years. In the past I've toyed with political images and rhetoric in an ironic and sarcastic way that could possibly confuse readers and obfuscate my leftist leanings. In this matter I wanted my feelings known and made clear in very certain terms. Making the work was cathartic for me, very much so initially. As I posted the pieces on social media I received a lot of feedback from people asking me to "keep it up". It was clear I was providing a very needed outlet for their own disappointment and wretched disbelief.

It's interesting that while the drawings in HUGE are horrifying and monstrous, the quotes that accompany them — so many actual quotes from Trump and his team — are the truly monstrous things here. How did these real quotes influence and interact with your sketches?

The drawing with the barrage of real-deal Trump quotes is probably the closest I got to conventional "political cartooning". I can actually imagine a version of that in a newspaper. I'm a comic book artist, so I like the interplay between text and image. It gives the reader/viewer something concrete to latch onto. Including text of Trump quotes struck me as an obvious choice. Not much editorializing was necessary. His mouth is a sewer spewing shit. At least Hitler read Spengler, listened to Wagner, painted, had ideas and a vision. Trump is hollow and soulless. He believes only in money and his own vanity.

You can buy *HUGE* at **thecomixcompany.ecrater.com**. Canadian customers can Paypal $8 in CDN funds to: **thecomixcompany@gmail.com**. (Alison Lang)

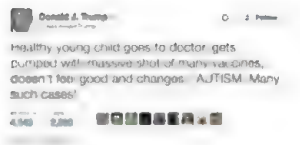
THE CHALLENGE OF THE ANTI-TRUMP ZINE AT A PRO-TRUMP RALLY

by Jason Luther

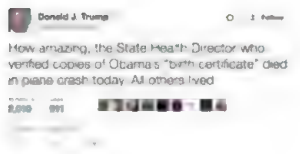
LAST APRIL, friends and community organizers in Syracuse, N.Y. were mobilizing — like so many others in the U.S. — to protest an impending Trump campaign rally at our downtown civic center. Leading up to it, they were promoting sabotage tactics like going online to claim admission vouchers so that campaign managers would think the venue was sold out; they were also encouraging people to come downtown for direct action the morning of the rally. I wasn't sure if I could make it down to support it, so feeling badly, I made the zine and posted the PDF version on the Facebook pages of the community organizations involved.

In hindsight, there were really two goals with the design. One was kind of obvious: to make the zine as simple as possible so that others could print/copy and fold them from their own homes and offices. But then there was a second goal, which was more complicated: how to make the hand-to-hand distribution effective but safe. I wanted to somehow get Trump supporters to reflect upon their choices, especially in terms of how their support of this sexist, racist, xenophobic candidate might actually be at odds with their other values — but I also wanted to do this peaceably. From what I remember, I made the content as I went along, considering especially what I found most repulsive about Trump's ethos. So I began to screengrab willy nilly from several listicles on his worst tweets, chopping them down to six, and pasting those images into a template. Thinking that supporters would maybe feel enthused (or at least ambivalent) about these tweets, I had the idea of using the back of the zine to flip the content. Thinking that my own voice we be interpreted as typical liberal sermonizing, I pasted the U.S. government's coordinated attempt to stop the same kind of bullying and incendiary rhetoric that the president-elect was propagating in his campaign. The idea was that by the time supporters put it all together, I (or the distributor) would be long lost in the crowd. In theory, anyway.

As it turned out, I was able to make to the rally and I brought 30 or so zines with me. The two crowds were separated by a city street, which served as a buffer, with Trump supporters on one side, protesters on the other, and the cops in between. For me, this led to a peaceful protest, but emphasized the division — a few Trump supporters were flipping off the protesters from their side, calling them names and such. Protesters had signs and banged drums. When I first arrived, I talked with friends and gave them a few zines, but I was really trying to work up the courage to cross the street and pass my zines out. But by the time I got to the other side, most of the crowd was already in the civic center. I had my admission voucher with me so I decided to go in alone, which was a mistake. Not having the guts to pass these out, I ended up going in and out of the men's room, dropping zines near urinals and sinks. There weren't any other places to drop them and the place was very much surveilled. Once the rally started, I saw some of my comrades dragged out of the civic center from the other side and I remember wishing I was with them.


Donald J. Trump
Healthy young child goes to doctor, gets pumped with massive shot of many vaccines, doesn't feel good and changes... AUTISM. Many such cases!

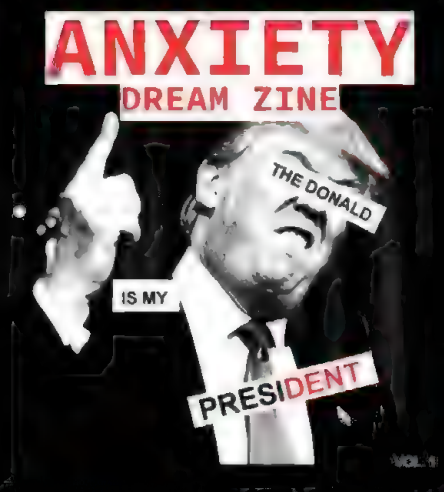
Donald J. Trump
I would like to wish everyone, including all haters and losers (of which, sadly, there are many) a truly happy and enjoyable Memorial Day!


Donald J. Trump
How amazing, the State Health Director who verified copies of Obama's "birth certificate" died in plane crash today. All others lived

Donald J. Trump
Everyone knows I am right that Robert Pattinson should dump Kristen Stewart. In a couple of years, he will thank me. Be smart, Robert

Although I would love to say that the zines made a difference, I think it actually reminded me of the importance of coalitional tactics when it comes to public protest. This will be so so important in what are sure to be dark days ahead in the U.S. Zines can and should play a role in that work, as long as they can be made and distributed in the name of solidarity.

Jason Luther is a writer and teacher currently finishing a PhD in the Composition & Cultural Rhetoric doctoral program at Syracuse University. He contributes zine reviews regularly to *Broken Pencil*.



WELCOME TO MY NIGHTMARE:

Alana Mohamed's Anxiety Dream Zine

IN THE MONTHS leading up to the 2016 presidential election, New York-based writer Alana Mohamed was plagued with vivid and awful dreams. One night she dreamt that Trump won the election and the world crumbled, leading to all New Yorkers being isolated and annexed into a single borough. It became the intro piece to her zine dedicated to people's nightmares about Trump, *Anxiety Dream Zine.*

"I was struck by the idea that I wasn't the only person with these fears about Trump's message and the resonance it had with some voters," Mohamed says. "Collecting other people's anxiety dreams about this cultural phenomenon seemed a really great time capsule in a way."

The result is a small but powerful assemblage of surreal visions and prose imaginings. One horrifying piece by Alex Greenberger imagines a robot-Trump's eyeball rolling back in his head during a press conference. Another sadder piece imagines a world where nearly everyone dies in a mysterious apocalyptic event and the survivors vote Barack Obama back into office. The entire zine — published just days before the election — is doubly haunting in hindsight; a testament to our collective fear and helplessness in an increasingly fraught and nightmarish world. Read it online at **issuu.com/alanamhmd.** (Alison Lang)

HOW TO SMASH A TRUMP PIÑATA

by Cory

DURING THE PRIMARY election, when Trump was addressing his most inflammatory rhetoric and when many people were still considering him merely a scarecrow, I had seen Vine videos of kids beating on Trump piñatas at birthday parties and thought it was a great way to bring some fun into political dissent.

It took about 16 hours total to make the piñata. I didn't make it, but I worked with the brother of the artist and she used heavy duty cardboard we salvaged from our warehouse job along with colourful tissue paper and paint. She is truly talented and deserves all the credit for the art, but she requested I not use her name because of her undocumented immigration status.

The zines inside the piñata were all themed around resistance and were provided by Any Means Necessary collective from Kansas City, Missouri, an anarchist front involved with many projects in that area. They provided zines on the Ferguson Rebellion; the women-led Kurdish Rojava fighters and the ideological leader of Kurdish resistance and the Abdullah Öcalan book *Democratic Confederalism*; there was a copy of *Queer Ultraviolence: A Bash Back!* anthology; an issue of *Black Seed*, which is an ecological journal from an anarchist perspective; Accomplices Not Allies and indigenous peoples call for "accomplices" who attack colonial structures and ideals and who are realized through mutual consent and trust.

The piñata smashing was at the afterparty for the 2016 Omaha Zine Fest. It was a dance party in a DIY space in Omaha managed by women and at the time, there was a pirate radio station in residency called Bomb Shelter Radio. The piñata was so well made that I didn't want to see it smashed but it felt good to see a group of artists, queers, musicians and zinesters cheer on the public beating of a Trump effigy.

This year, we're going to build a bigger Trump piñata. It will be tremendous. I mean it folks, you'll love this piñata. It is simply yuge and I tell you what folks, we are going to give that Trump a bigly beating.

Cory *is a zinemaker and printing press operator from Omaha, N.E. who helped make a Trump piñata filled with zines for an Omaha Zine Fest afterparty in March of 2016. You can follow them on Twitter @circled_a.*

THE MODEL AND THE MYSTERY:

HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE MELANIA

by Jonathan Valelly

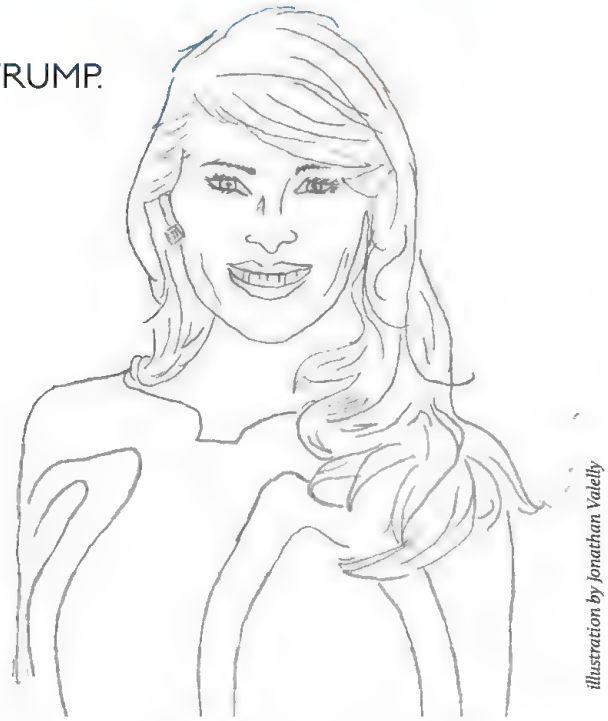


illustration by Jonathan Valelly

I LOVE MELANIA TRUMP.

Really, I mean it.

Sure, as a queer, lefty, zine-making American expat in Toronto, you might assume that anything to do with Donald Trump or his family would cause an immediate retching on my part. And it's true that, like any person with half a soul, election night brought me a mix of a deep fear and a hardening conviction to resist the awful futures Donald Trump's presidency makes possible. Yet Melania Trump still makes me smile, and I'm finding that it's less out of some perverse irony (though there's some of that) and more because there's just so much I find fascinating about her.

The 46-year-old Slovenian First-Lady-to-be has been mocked and meme-ified for her career as a model, including some very sexy and scantily clad shoots. She's been teased for being too dense to see the irony of taking up cyberbullying as her pet cause when her own husband's Twitter account is so destructive and nasty. And she's been accused, perhaps accurately, of being deeply disengaged with — even distressed by — the office of the First Lady amidst suggestions that The Donald's daughter Ivanka will fill the role.

But liberals' tendency to belittle or laugh at Melania Trump belies an obsession with respectability, and a cruel, knotty attachment to restrictive morés of what a woman, her marriage, and her family ought to be. Of course, the particular flavour of disparagement that Melania Trump invokes is not to be compared to the outright racist and horrifying insults that Michelle Obama has suffered merely for existing. But Melania presents consumers and creators of culture a complex and challenging figure to negotiate.

In a recent, largely incoherent article on Esquire.com, the headline pleads "Please Don't Make Melania Trump a Gay Icon." Of course, nobody has the power to make a person a gay icon (if it's meant to be, we have no choice. Praise Whitney!). However, the author goes on to list all of the great reasons Melania might be a rockstar for the gays — she's gorgeous, a bit cartoonish, and in many ways perfectly campy. Even so, the piece turns around and concludes that "the whole [Trump] family needs to be targets of our contempt, not just the one in charge."

But why? Sure, Melania probably rubs shoulders with some truly evil people, and did steal bits of Michelle Obama's DNC speech (very probably, unwittingly). And she has publicly, if begrudgingly, defended her husband's misogyny and sexual predation.

But she also seems totally disinterested in him as a person, fairly apolitical, and seems to mostly enjoy being fabulous and doing her own thing. She isn't your typical wife or mom, and she isn't an easy First Lady to get a read on.

The truth is, there's a lot we don't know about Melania's life. Does she spend much time with Donald? Is he as big of an asshole to her as he is to other women? How does she overcome that? How might we criticize Melania Trump, while also acknowledging her formidable success and what must be great strength in a strange, dark life?

And seriously, possibly most importantly, how can we get past the sexist, paradigmatic nuclear family bullshit that make us feel like it's okay to criticize people like Melania who might marry for wealth, people who have multiple marriages, or people who stay in marriages that displease the public or even themselves?

Melania challenges us to make room for a different kind of first lady, one who most likely doesn't care whether we make her a gay icon or whether she lives in the White House or whether we know what her day looks like or what her values are. So she enters into our artistic and cultural imaginary as a living vessel for so many of our anxieties and our questions. So let's do it. Let's learn to learn to symbolize, learn to be surprised by, and yes, learn to love Melania. bp

Jonathan Valelly is assistant editor of *Broken Pencil*

THE HUSTLE

How indie creators are making it work right now

by Suzanne Alyssa Andrew

Interviews were edited and condensed. Suzanne Alyssa Andrew gratefully acknowledges the support of the Ontario Arts Council's Writer's Reserve Program.

I ALWAYS WANTED to be an author when I grew up. As a teen I moved 4,000 kilometres away from my hometown on Vancouver Island with two suitcases and a box. I worked like crazy to pay my way through two university degrees, then competed like a champ for writing work in Toronto. I weathered layoffs and start-up bankruptcies in a volatile economy and hustled as a freelancer. I sacrificed social time and sleep to write. Along the way I picked up a bass, started jamming in bands and played local shows, which was awesome. When my novel, *Circle of Stones*, was published in 2015 to positive reviews, I felt all the effort I spent pursuing that dream was worth it.

But in the summer of 2016 I started to question it all. I was burnt out and broke. My book sold, but the market for Canadian literature is shockingly small. Freelance clients seemed surprised when I pitched them, as though they assumed I was making money from my book.

The reality was my creative pursuits cost me more than I made from them. I paid for editing, design, marketing and an indie tour for my book plus music gear, rehearsal space and recording. I wondered — if they didn't generate income, were writing and music mere hobbies? Would I only ever get to do this part-time? Was doing it for the love enough?

Then I did some research and discovered the market for art, writing and music is broken. The Writers' Union of Canada teamed up with Music Canada and other arts organizations to do something about it last fall, and the statistics they reported as part of their Focus on Creators campaign are ugly: Canadian musicians only earn an average of $7,228 a year from music; most musicians can only afford to spend up to 29 hours a week on music and Canadian writers are making 27 percent less today than they were in 1998.

At the same time, affordable housing, studio and venue space is at a premium in Canadian cities. In 2016, the median rent for the average one-bedroom apartment costs $1,740 in Vancouver, $1,350 in Toronto and $960 in Montreal. Gentrification continues to push artists out of commercial studios and live/work spaces: Toronto artists were forced out of warehouse spaces on Wallace Avenue and Sterling Road in 2016, and as the year ended, after 23 years of housing cultural organizations even the iconic 401 Richmond building was under threat by an 85 percent tax hike. The tragic Ghost Ship venue fire in Oakland last fall also left artists across North America fearing a crackdown on DIY spaces and more displacement.

Artists are losing the spaces they need to create and jam in, at the same time their incomes are dropping and the cost of living is rising. The creative middle class is dead. It really is tougher than ever—but not impossible. Here's how eight indie creators from across the country are making it work.

ADAM **ABBAS**

Writer, playwright, poet. Runs Train Yards Collections, a Canadian-made clothing company and paints for fun

Survival tactic: Practical skills (he recommends computer training and Excel know-how), and connections.

Income sources: Lived off savings and freelance ESL tutoring until he landed a job in fall helping new immigrants learn English.

Balance and innovation: He moved back to Winnipeg from Toronto last year and is working on the next collection for Train Yards, producing one of his plays at the University of Manitoba and writing a poetry chapbook.

Reality check: Like many of us he struggles to stay positive: "My challenges are all mental hurdles, based on reality—the feeling of everything being for nothing, where every step forward is threatened with two steps backward."

Advice: "If you're an artist in a large city, take advantage of all the opportunities available, and if you're in a small city, know as many like-minded people as possible."

AVA **MARKUS**

Indie musician, actor and producer working in theatre, film, music and online

Survival tactic: Lives as a minimalist creative nomad.

Income sources: Acting contracts, grants, health coaching and occasional work at Float Toronto.

Balance and innovation: Her band Werewolves, Beware! toured with The Pack A.D. and she co-founded IF WHEN NOW YES, a performance company. To get by, she gave away and sold almost all of her belongings and splits her time between Alberta, BC and Toronto: "My expenses are so simplified that I'll never need to do 40 hours at a side job. I have dominion over my time and I value that above anything else."

Reality check: All of her income from music and dance productions goes back into making more. She focuses on staying healthy and reducing stress amidst zero job security: "Every year I have no idea what work will come my way, but it's a kind of mystery I've always loved."

Advice: "Choose health over hustle — value rest, go into nature or a float tank, create retreats."

DORETTA **LAU**

Author of the story collection, *How Does a Single Blade of Grass Thank the Sun?*

Survival tactic: Healthy living and a five-year plan.

Income sources: Full-time work as managing editor for Asia Art Archive, also writes essays.

Balance and innovation: She's working on a novel and a screenplay and blogs about wellness at **dorettalau.com**. She saves money by making lunches and abstaining from alcohol and coffee. She also prioritizes her writing, even if that means saying "no" to invitations, and refuses to write for free.

Reality check: She says receiving a Canada Council grant in 2014 felt like winning the lottery (it was $12,000). She now lives in Hong Kong but when she lived in Vancouver in the early 2000s she says it was more affordable: she could tutor, DJ and interview bands for the alt-weekly and get by.

Advice: "Make sure you have a big project in progress and that everything you do is in service of completing it."

ELISHA **LIM**

Graphic novelist, illustrator, storyteller and author of 100 Crushes

Survival tactic: Merchandising and finding a niche.

Income sources: Back at school studying art history after freelancing and working in galleries.

Balance and innovation: They found success turning comics into practical objects like calendars, notebooks, jewellery and zines (see @elisha_lim on Instagram), and that's helping sustain them through school as a side hustle, alongside personal loans and savings. Going back to school marked a shift for them but at the height of their practice they felt alive: "Every day I was making art I cared about. It's worthwhile and I think it changes the world."

Reality check: "The challenge is getting to the end of the month and barely having enough to pay your rent. It's depressing." But they also note artists aren't precious: "I'd fight for more social welfare so everyone can afford to eat and pay rent. I think any mom who feeds their kids is doing good work."

Advice: "If you don't have the privilege of a white guy, niches are crucial. Sell zines at a queer zine festival, submit your films to the *Real Asian* Film Festival. Find an audience in any subculture you belong to." They also recommend every artist download a budgeting app, like EveryDollar.

JIM **MUNROE**

Game and movie writer/producer, background as a graphic and prose novelist

Survival tactic: Community involvement in indie gaming and arts organizations.

Income sources: Grants and videogame work.

Balance and innovation: Munroe published his first novel with Harper Collins in the 90s, then decided to self-publish his work. He spent a decade publishing his own books then became interested in games. He also poured energy into arts community organizing, which raised his profile and helped build his network of pals and allies. He says he "continues to strive to bring something beautiful and necessary into the world."

Reality check: He says he usually has to work at something for about five years for free before earning any income from it, and, as a self-professed anarchist considers money as a byproduct of the cultural capital he creates. He's also concerned about creators in their 20s: "It really sucks that this generation has to hustle because they were born too late. It's already created conditions for anxiety and other mental problems. I feel like a lot of them are going to hit a wall by their 30s, unless things change."

Advice: "Develop skills that are useful to other people that compliment your art practice. Become useful enough that people pay you to do those things."

MICHAEL **SMALL**

Bass player and band manager

Survival tactic: Keep busy and maintain a sense of humour.

Income sources: Plays bass, manages the band Fresh Snow, works part-time at a bar, does freelance writing for *NOW* magazine and occasionally drives a delivery van.

Balance and innovation: He plays bass in a lot of bands, including AA Wallace, Thomas D'Arcy, Overnight, Bankruptcy, the Meligrove Band, Brent Randall, the Ossington Rippers and also for the punk/CBGB-themed offshoot of Good Enough Live Karaoke, though admits "adapting to the rehearsal schedules of seven different bands can get pretty hairy."

Reality check: In spite of his hectic band schedule he still needs to supplement his music earnings with other work, and not every band he's in pays. Those projects are about "hangouts and good times. That's what being alive is for!"

Advice: "Try and write a hit song! Hahaha."

A DAY IN THE LIFE

A glimpse into an artist's day-to-day schedule

MICHAEL SMALL

Morning: Wake up around 8 a.m. (unless I just played a show, then 11), dislodge arm from under cat, make coffee, read news, answer email, boil eggs, water plants, etc.

Afternoon: Learn songs, run errands, chip away at longer-term projects, or go to one of my part-time jobs (while listening to music I'm learning).

Evening: Often, taxi to rehearsal with one of the active bands I play with. Otherwise, maybe laundry. I'm always behind on laundry.

AVA MARKUS

Morning: Wake up around 7:30 a.m. for a 10 a.m. rehearsal at Tarragon Theatre. (Always re-reading the script and learning lines in transit).

Afternoon: End rehearsal by 1 p.m. (on a sweet half day schedule). Get home, EAT, play around with some new tunes, complete applications.

Evening: Usually dive back into script work for the next rehearsal day, or tending to emails/calls for my short film that is in post-production. Video games (MarioKart!) or stretching to wind down. Or if I'm lucky I squeezed in 60 minutes of tank time at Float Toronto.

DORETTA LAU

Morning: On a day where I go into the office, I wake up at 7:30 a.m. and lie on an acupressure mat for 30 minutes while listening to podcasts or audiobooks. I make a green smoothie and drink half of it and bring the rest to work. If I have time, I journal. I read during my subway commute and catch up on social media.

Afternoon: I try my best to free up the mornings to edit, write, and plan, while keeping afternoons for meetings and e-mails.

Evening: On Monday nights I write a blog entry and post it. Often, I watch TV (so many shows, so little time), do housework, write personal e-mails, and scour Twitter for good essays.

TARIQ HUSSAIN

Morning: Mornings are the best time to be creative for me. My brain is still operating on the subconscious level. I'll get up around 8 a.m., eat breakfast and get to it. If it's a music day, I'll work on a song. If it's a writing day, I'll call up my memoir-in-progress. I make a conscious effort not to check emails or get distracted by messages on my phone.

Afternoon: I check emails and tend to things that need tending to. The danger of working at home is that the whole day can go by, and you never leave the house. So, mid-afternoon I'll head for a walk (with headphones and an album to listen to) or a bike ride. Then it's a stop at the grocery store and more taking care of business.

Evening: Post dinner routines vary. I might read, watch an episode of something, go out with friends or see a live music show. Going out can mess with the whole timeline I've just described, but sometimes you just gotta break the routine.

TOM CHO

Fiction writer and author of *Look Who's Morphing*

Survival tactic: Maintain a parallel career.

Income sources: Freelancing with a specialization in writing arts funding proposals, business plans for not-for-profits and academic editing. He's also received grants.

Balance and innovation: He's writing a novel that's a mash-up of fiction and philosophy. He emigrated to Canada last year from Australia where he helped an Australian arts organizations develop business plans as part of their funding applications.

Reality check: After teaching grant writing workshops he now advocates for changes to grants systems that would make them more diverse and more gracious to people whose first language is not English. "I want arts funding systems that can better accommodate the breadth of artists and art practices that exist, and create fairer distributions of power in the arts."

Advice: "Create arts funding systems that are more hospitable and just... support artists on low incomes in carrying out their creative practice."

TARIQ HUSSAIN

Musician in the band Brasstronaut, solo singer-songwriter and writer

Survival tactic: Follow your heart, live frugally and don't give up.

Income sources: Creative writing instructor at the University of British Columbia, FACTOR music grants.

Balance and innovation: Before landing the teaching gig he spent a decade working in coffee shops. He advocates living frugally in a way that doesn't feel torturous: he saves money by making lunches and rarely eating at restaurants. Music is always a priority for him and he relies on passion to stay motivated: "If you love doing it, that's what drives you. Make good art you feel proud of and the other stuff will fall into place."

Reality check: He says all of his creative projects have the potential to make money, but there are no guarantees: "Brasstronaut is definitely a labour of love done with friends. We've been at this for awhile with no windfall. We used to tour with camping gear, and now we ask for accommodations but I still have my Therm-A-Rest."

Advice: "If you really believe in a project put your effort and passion into it. Keep trying and don't give up." bp

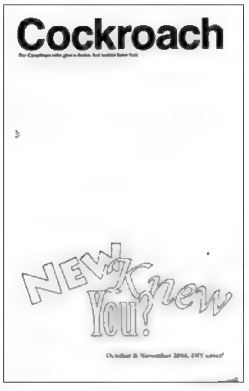
by cherrykutti

cherrykutti is a Toronto-based artist working in mostly ink and pencils. Her work is inspired by their experience of being split between Dubai, Toronto and Colombo, Sri Lanka, and the alienation she's felt as a result of it. See her work at **cherrykutti.threadless.com**.

Ballz Montreal

Zine, 40 pgs, BallzMontreal.com, ballz.montreal@gmail.com

Ballz Montreal (BMTL) is a scattered snapshot of modern life and confusion in Canada's second largest city. It looks like a playbill but the content is definitely not orderly. This zine doesn't play it safe at any point. Instead, it's micro-statements and found visuals that exposit on certain themes in certain ways. Many of the biggest surnames on the planet (Trump, Musk, Putin) appear. No clear shots taken but plenty of angular language, splattered. Font sizes vary. Images (and tweets) are literally cut, pasted and copied. A pretty kick-ass listing of 1990s hip-hop hits acts as an intermission halfway through. Then, it's back to the jagged poetry and scrappy scrapbook stuff. There's probably a political undercurrent to this entire zine but lack of narrative leaves that decision up to the reader. Possibly, photos of Canadian VIPs Peter Mansbridge and (a young) David Suzuki might help the reader get on course a bit. But that said, it's not a bad thing to get loopy once in a while. In the spirit of this statement, *BMTL* is a worthy art-as-trash project and one that is probably worth trying to decode. (Cam Gordon)



Cockroach #18

Advice zine, Various, 26 pgs, cockroachzine.com, $5

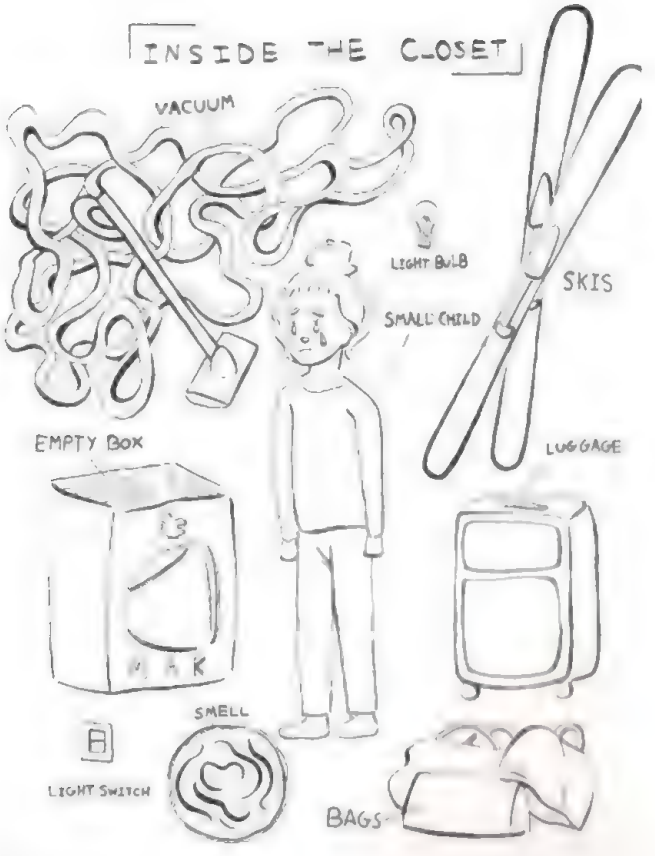
It's been a while since I've gotten a zine with a clear purpose. *Cockroach* is here to lend a helping hand and a little bit of perspective.

The latest issue of the long-running Winnipeg-based eco-feminist zine compiles a handful of personal experiences and stories. The elements of interactivity scattered throughout are a nice touch too. The cover is meant to be decorated with doodles, and there are prompts for discussion that allow the reader to write their own ideas, questions and doodles in the blank page that they can then post to Instagram. These prompts attempt to further involve the reader in the content and motivate the mag's potential for inciting change. Topics of conversation range from self-harm and suicide, to sexual abuse, to anxiety and psychological health, to thrift shopping and commodity-owning and more. Perhaps the most constructive interactive prompt follows a personal article by Megan Linton on sexual abuse and the surrounding culture that silences and further traumatizes victims. The following interactive nugget asks readers to contemplate the possibilities of change toward a consent culture. "If we're living in a consent culture, ensuring potential partners were cool with everything going down would be normal and expected," the zine's editors write. "Obviously, we're not there." The mag also offers some modest advice to jumpstart the dialogue on the matter: "Talk about what consent looks like, especially with partners ... Allow children to decide what happens to their own body ... Sex is fun but it's not a prize or a goal. Stop talking like it is one."

All in all, this issue of *Cockroach* is a sincere read, where experience dovetails into constructive societal criticism. (Jeff Low)

Excerpt

from The Hallway Closet
by Evie Tampold, Carol Nash



reviewed on page 28

The Hallway Closet

Perzine, Evi Tampold (author), Carol Nash (editor), 26 pgs, Tampold Publishing, cavershambooksellers.com, $12

The Hallway Closet is a remarkable graphic novel written by Evi, a 16-year-old author and illustrator, about living with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). More than that, it is about the relationship between a daughter and her mother, an exploration of the ways we learn self-control, and a vivid picture of the level of devotion and partnership required by parents with children who experience differences of cognitive processing.

At the beginning of the book Evi describes the anger and her overwhelming feelings of lack of control when she was six. The title describes a space where Evi's mother would lead her when she would get "hyperactive" — she would sit or stand in the hallway closet with the lights off, amongst boxes and suitcases, until she felt calm enough to come out. The reader is presented with a full-bodied picture of what being in the closet must have been like — Tampold uses text and image to describe the effect of the closet on all of her senses. Contrary to what you might think, however, this closet represented a space of healing for Evi. Her mother would sit outside the door until Evi declared, of her own volition, that she was ready to rejoin the world. The book is 26 pages, printed in black and white with a brightly-coloured cover. The images are simple and stark, representing both the necessary vacuum of sensory deprivation inside the closet and Evi, quite literally, hugging the vacuum. The latter part of the zine represents an adolescent Evi exploring her memories of being in the closet now that she no longer uses it.

Though the zine could have done a better job acknowledging the problems with this strategy for other kids with ADHD or other coping strategies that worked for Evi (admittedly, a thorough exploration of sensory deprivation as a parenting strategy and calming technique isn't really the point of the book), it opens up an important discussion about what a healing space looks like, and how families can help youth find their own. We often think of coping strategies as exclusively self-generated: Tampold's book highlights the importance of working together with those around you to develop these strategies.

Part of the proceeds of *The Hallway Closet* will fund Alpha II Alternative School, a public school founded in part by Carol Nash, Evi's mother. (CJ Blennerhassett)

Hoser Punx Vol. 4

Fanzine, Shelby Monita, hoserpunx@gmail.com, $7

2016 was a straight-up heinous year: beloved rock icons like Leonard Cohen and Prince died, the twin political calamities of Brexit and Trump happened, and it's remained fashionable to wear jogging pants in public. At the rate things are going, I expect airplanes will soon just start falling out of the sky. So it is fitting (and appreciated) that Shelby Monita (editor of *Hoser Punx*) started out the zine's fourth installment by saying: "Hey, we know it's been tough, we feel your pain and hope this little punk zine lifts your spirits just a little." But then the zine included an interview with one of my favourite bands, Nomeansno, which reminded me that not long ago (and probably after *Hoser Punx Vol. 4* came out) Nomeansno disbanded forever. So it goes: even the things designed to cheer us up can inadvertently bum us out.

This zine comes from my hometown of Ottawa, and while I am not as hip to the punk scene there as I once was, I've heard that it's the tops. I definitely get that impression based on the raw enthusiasm of the contributors, who scribble nice drawings, invite you to play in their kitchen, and flagrantly gush about Pouzzafest, which unites Ottawa punx in their "love of dirty music and getting fucked up." This zine is rough around the edges but contains the sincere appreciation of the simple pleasure of the punk and the rock. Visually, the zine is cut-and-paste and bound in a torn off LCBO bag with the title scribbled over it in Sharpie. There is some rather conspicuous Canadian flag imagery throughout that seemed a little out of place and patriotic for a punk zine, but hey, they do call themselves *Hoser Punx* so whatever! Good stuff. (Chris Landry)

Kill Your TV

Zine, Wrrrtika, 12 pgs., wrrrtika.tumblr.com, $5

Listen, I enjoy television as much as the next chump, but I think you, me and the Toronto-based musician and glitch artist Wrrtika all know it's time to *Office Space* that sucker with a baseball bat, or another bludgeoning device. Dark times call for dark measures — and from here in my American home (aka Trumpland), I can tell you things are the darkest they've ever been. TV is at least 50% responsible for getting me and the rest of your neighbors to the south into this mess (BTW: The other 50% is racism). So, Canada, learn from our mistakes and from Wrrrtika's wisdom: put a hockey stick through that LCD screen and never look back.

Wrrrtika only needs 12 pages to make a convincing case, each packed with black-and-white glitched-out first-person

support from trusted sources like Dirty Harry, "Mr. Jim Business" and "Donatella Discotheque" ("I murdered my TV [and] it's been a great help to my modelling career ..."). Wrrrtika's critical statistics make a data-driven argument as well: "In 2015 Death By TV was: 53% more likely than Death By Shark." WHAT? Never mind that the peppering of celebrity endorsements cut-and-pasted from other publications with random redactions in their accounts. They're all saying the same thing: Tour TV must die.

Go ahead and laugh — it's a funny zine — but when you're done laughing, shed a tear for America. We'll just be down here suffering under the new fascist state run by a reality TV star basking in the glow of his own reflection beaming from a million American TVs, because we didn't act quick enough. Don't be next, Canada. Kill. Your. TV. P.S. Wrrrtika: Next up, can we get a *Kill Your Smart Phone*? (Joshua Barton)

The End and the Beginning: Thoughts from the Tragically Hip's Final Shows

Fanzine, Vish Khanna, 16 pgs, LabelObscura.com, info@labelobscura.com

A ton of ink was spilled in 2016 about the Tragically Hip. The year in music basically sucked in terms of lives lost and the Hip news was hardly better with the revelation that Hip lead singer Gord Downie had been diagnosed with terminal brain cancer. It seems almost backwards to be flipping through a zine that recounts the band's final shows. Love them or otherwise, the Hip were never zine fodder. They weren't typically cool amongst the zine crowd, from what I could see. But as this shit story unfolded, tributes flooded in from every form of media so the zine world should be no different. Besides, the author is none other than Vish Khanna, easily one of the most legit people in Canadian music media circles and a person who clearly cares a ton. This zine shares Khanna's first-person review of the Hip's five final Ontario shows: London, Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, Kingston. These words are less about the tunes and more about the timbre in the crowd: knowing that something real was coming to a hard stop soon. Tons of personality

from Kill your TV
by Wrrrtika

We killed our TV one cold [redacted] and the next day this dog appeared. She led us to a wooded thicket where she vomited a golden orb!
our sex life has improved too!
boof
Lucy + Sarah
It was [redacted] easy to kill my TV. I just hit it with an old boot. Kapow! This seems to have given me the ability to control squirrels, which is very nice. They built this lovely chair for me.
Good boys!
Lydia

reviewed on page 29

bleeds through as Khanna overshares in the best possible ways. Personal anecdotes, conversations, plenty of really great exposition. This almost reads more like a coping mechanism than a zine. A therapeutic device. A keepsake. If you're gonna pick this up and read it, Google Vish Khanna first. It'll paint a fulsome picture of a person who really likes a band, and why that really matters. (Cam Gordon)

You Still Need a Coffin

Zine, Shivaun Hoad, twitter.com/shivaunish, $5

This zine blends the genre of the how-to guide and the personal memoir and tells you exactly what to expect when someone in your life buys the big one. Writer Shivaun Hoad, who comes off pretty composed, describes just such a situation when her uncle died, beginning from the 3am phone call from the Toronto Police to the scattering of his ashes days later. The cover of this one-pager (slit down the middle and folded into an 8-page mini zine) reads, "I'm not an expert but I cremated somebody once." While there is a lot of useful information in this tiny zine, what stuck with me were the idiosyncrasies: the cab driver inexplicably dropping Hoad off at the arthritis care clinic instead of the cardiac centre at Toronto's Sunnybrook Hospital, her agreeing to see the body even though she didn't want to ("because it seems heartless to say no"), and how mourners are legally required to purchase a casket for their loved one to be cremated in (no, you cannot use a coffee tin like in *The Big Lebowski*).When Shivaun asks if her uncle was in pain when he passed, the doctor gives an evasive answer, simply stating that he arrived lucid and quickly fell unconscious. "They must have a class on this at med school," she muses.

I put the zine down and asked my partner Ruby, who is a med student: "Did you have a class about giving soft pedaled answers regarding painful deaths to make the family feel better?" "Maybe a lecture," she said.

The zine folds out into a checklist and provides resources that anyone will find useful in such unfortunate circumstances. Humorous but honest, direct and organized, and visually spare (no pretty pictures of flowers or praying hands like in some awful funeral pamphlet) this is a superb use of the medium. (Chris Landry)

COMICS AND ART ZINES

That Darn Diva Cup

Comic, Pun 2 3, 7 pgs, pun23.tumblr.com, $3

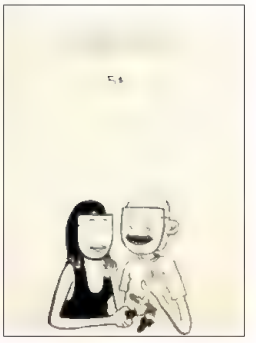
That Darn Diva Cup is a straight up hilarious explanation of why all of our menstrual cups are leaking. Ya'll know the frustration of walking around every month with a diva cup AND a pad on. Zinemaker Pun, 2, 3 creates a masterful image of a smoking labia/vagina named Clit Eastwood — who I'm fairly certain is carrying a sidearm — who has a conversation with D.J. Diva, a blinged-out Diva Cup who will teach you about rotating your cup to prevent leakage. The short zine, all in black and white and only 7 pages, will come in handy in terms of both education and hilarity.

Fun fact, Clit Eastwood appears in more of Pun 2 3's zines, check them out at pun23.tumblr.com. (CJ Blennerhassett)

Death Plate #2

Comic, Dany Reede, 56 pgs., sadhauspress.com, danyreede.com, $3.84

Purportedly a comic zine about a "dream-eating lamp", Dany Reede's latest creation takes visual twists and turns through a baffling subconscious. The zine is laid out on miniature yellow landscape-oriented pages and the story unfolds in one to three panels per page without dialogue, but with much cinematographic style. The gaze of each successive panel seems to zoom deeper and deeper into the increasingly microscopic depths of the hungry lamp's dream smorgasbord, like snapshots from a one-camera descent into an abyss of sleeping visions. This issue of *Death Plate* is thoughtfully assembled in a numbered edition of 100. The outer cover is graph paper with delicately printed typewriter script and a small plant print. The endpapers are purple tissue, followed by one inner blue page bearing the only text of the zine: "In the late hours of March 17," presumably the night of the fateful dream consumption. Truth be told, it took me a while to figure out that the dream-eater in question was a lamp. I'm pretty sure that it's an Ikea lamp — one that looks like a deep sea urchin. Picture one of those circling your midnight psychic murmurings. Yeesh. The "action," as it were, is a little hard to follow in Dany's zine; I'm honestly not sure what's happening throughout most it. But he scores points for concept and method. (Joshua Barton)



DOGVOMIT

Comic, JB, jbdrawz@gmail.com, $5

"This is all I've got." This statement, written self-deprecatingly by artist JB in the front cover of his latest zine *Dogvomit* might

prime an uninitiated reader for something a little breezy and silly — but after finishing the zine, the blunt opening statement takes on a very different meaning. *Dogvomit* unabashedly depicts the processes of dating, hooking up, breaking up and breaking down in a series of illustrated panels. As with his previous zines, many of which were released by Vancouver's Comics Company, JB cracks himself open and oozes all over his pages. *Dogvomit* takes violence and erotica and meshes them together to create a very poignant look at how dramatic and sickening it can feel to have your heart broken. One of my personal favourite pages is "Some Things My Dog has Witnessed," a four panel strip showcasing the dark times that a person would want to keep entirely secret, unfolding before the non-judgemental eyes of a pet. According to this page, JB's dog has witnessed suicide attempts, drunkenness and fighting violently with a partner. Some will read this issue and call it unapologetically honest; others will read this issue and call it vulgar and juvenile, which is what JB does in the introduction. Overall, *DOGVOMIT* is a heavy read coming out of what seems to be an incredibly dark place, but it also feels like an exorcism in and of itself because everyone can relate to feeling stepped on. (Richelle Charkot)

Fu Yuanhui At The Rio 2016 Olympics

Comic, Stephanie Cheng, stephaniecheng.ca, $3

Cheng's zine is a short, quippy collection of the best moments from Fu Yuanhui's appearance at the 2016 Rio Olympics. The swimmer from Hangzhou, China won the bronze medal in the 100m backstroke. She was the first Chinese Olympian to medal in the backstroke and she captured worldwide attention with her animated reaction to her victory. Cheng's zine represents perfectly the feeling of watching Fu Yuanhui's viral media moments. The zine, only six pages, is all red and yellow with a screenshot-style feel to the images. Cheng's zine takes us from Yuanhui's surprise at her 100m backstroke medal to the loss of the 4x100m medley relay final where she told reporters that she felt weak and tired because of her period. The juxtaposition in the zine between Yuanhui's elation at her victory and sadness at her self-described period-related loss is stark. This moment in popular culture was huge — people who have periods loved her honesty.What is so important about this zine, though, is the legitimacy with which Cheng treats Yuanhui's personality. Lots of the (racist) media coverage painted her as a flighty, stereotypically wispy Chinese woman fawning and squealing. Cheng presents a picture of the same soundbites we all re-tweeted without commentary; showcasing Yuanhui as a hardworking swimmer reacting honestly to her performance — you win some you lose some. (CJ Blennerhassett)

Excerpts

from That Darn Diva Cup
by Pun 2, 3

Reviewed on page 30

Excerpt

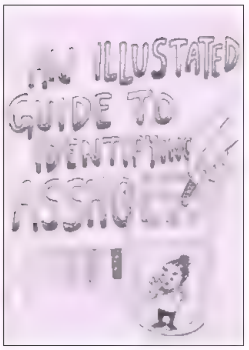
from Hoser Punx, edited by Shelby Monita

reviewed on page 28

Excerpts

from No One Likes to Keep Going After They've Cum
by Shelby McLeod and Zoe Harvey

reviewed on page 32



An Illustated Guide to Identifying Assholes

Comic, Eyvan Collins, eyvancollins@gmail.com, quittercomix.tumblr.com, $5

The truth hurts, and sometimes the truth is staring us right in the face and we can't see it. Through a deliberately-mispelled "illustated" (I saw what you did there) comic zine, Eyvan takes the reader through all the warning signs that you or someone you love might be an asshole. Humorously, the mascot for asshole is a tiny hipster with a man bun! However, getting to the bottom of the question "Am I an asshole?" is serious business. For example, do you tell people that your ex is "crazy"? Are you rude to wait staff? Is *The Catcher in the Rye* your favourite book? This checklist will help you self-diagnose, so that you can rehabilitate — it's on all of us, Eyvan says. Short, nicely illustrated, and direct, I appreciated that An Illustated Guide identifies behaviours and attitudes that really make the world a lousier place, while at the same time suggesting that we are all capable of doing better. Many of us would have the urge to tell someone who believes that reverse racism is a thing to just, I don't know, set themselves on fire, but Eyvan sees the potential for good in humanity. This is a wonderful paradox: calling out an asshole but then empowering them to cut off their white guy dreadlocks, stop interrupting, and go forth as a kinder, more fully realized version of themselves. (Chris Landry)

Locus Zine #7

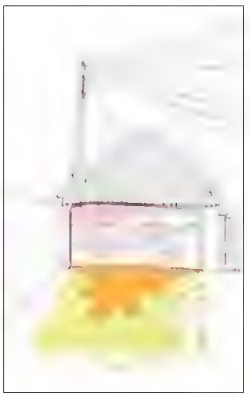
Artzine, various, 32 pgs., locus-zine.com, $10

The fine folks at *Locus* have issued another beautiful, full-colour zine of art by multiple contributors, this time with the theme "Upside Down." With some contributors turning in single pages and others two, the 32-page collection offers up a lot of graphic diversity. The theme of the issue is interpreted by the artists in a number of ways, sometimes simply by having a figure

from Fu Yuanhi at the Rio 2016 Olympics
by Stephanie Cheng

reviewed on page 31

standing on their head. In other cases, the themes appear in ways more suggestive of irregular juxtaposition or straight-up chaos. Two of my favorites in the collection are from Christy Lundy and Glenn Harvey. In Christy Lundy's charming contribution, a happy family is at play in their living room, reading, playing with toys — except they're all dogs. In Glenn Harvey's skillful mainstream comic art style, a bedroom, its sheet-draped inhabitant and its contents are all afloat and flipped about, as if being tossed by a tornado. The artists curated for this issue all employ vivid colour printed and presented nicely here. The paper is heavy and the prints fill the entire page. The superimposition of page numbers on the artists' work is somewhat regrettable. The collection as a whole, though, is well done, impressively assembled and worth picking up. (Joshua Barton)



No One Likes to Keep Going After They've Cum

Comic, Shelby McLeod and Zoe Harvey, 8 pgs, shelbymcleod.com, $5

I picked up this slim illustrated zine during my usual 15-min period of frantic wandering/buying during Canzine Toronto last year. Shelby's illustrations immediately drew me to their table — the cover of the zine features its title emblazoned across a back-alley garage door, and it's an image that struck me as both heavy, stark and strangely cute at the same time. This zine explores what I think is the dissolution of a relationship, juxtaposed against the experience of an artist spraypainting their thoughts in Toronto alleyways. There's a drawing of a half-open door in what feels like a very Toronto-ish apartment, radiators lined up beneath the open windows, and shoes thrown off beneath the coatracks. Throughout the zine, there are frustrated musings: "How can I tell you what I'm thinking with my teeth clenched shut?" Later, as the artist faces another alleyway: "I am not impressed, just easily forgiving, and in love with you." I spend a lot of time roaming through the alleyways of Toronto with my dog Nattie. As she races down the asphalt, through the dead leaves and dirty snow, my mind often wanders towards the joys and fuck-ups of my past, towards how I can make things better in the future. I related so deeply to this zine and the way it quietly grapples with the soft anguish that accompanies being in love with someone who is not at all right for you. (Alison Lang)

Read More Comix

Comic, Robb Mirsky, James Spencer and David Craig, Volume 1, readmorecomix.com, $5

Vulgar cigarettes, anthropomorphic bricks, and a sewer mutant who tries to amalgamate itself back into society are just some of the zany characters you'll meet in this brilliantly devised debut. Curated by prolific trio Robb Mirsky, James Spencer and David Craig, *Read More Comix* is a hilarious collection of vignettes that celebrate surrealism, absurdity and overall laugh-out-loud silliness. The zine itself is laconic in its structure, composed sparsely of words and dialogue. However, when there is dialogue, hilarity ensues. Most episodes rely on illustration and the reader's retention for storytelling. The zine's cover is reflective of the comic's eccentric and colourful nature and the insanity of the universe where it all takes place. The urbanites, the inanimate objects, the paranormal and animals all come together as subjects of a rotating narrative that makes them all prisoners to their cruel creators' irony. It's rare for *Read More Comix* to offer any solutions to the problems that it creates for its characters but it probably never aimed to resolve any issues either, as most stories end off on a note that leaves readers more confused than when they started. This is the charm that propels the greatness of *Read More Comix.*

With that in mind, if you do end up making a choice to read more comics, *Read More Comix* is a stellar place to begin. (Zack Fenech)

Roadtrip to Nelson

Comic, Steph Hill, 12 pages, sahillio@gmail.com, $5

The adult colouring book phenomenon may turn the stomachs of some. That doesn't mean that zines in the same vicinity can't tug on heartstrings. *Roadtrip to Nelson* is a comic-based retelling on the kind of semi-perpetual homecoming that many of us face. This one is centred on Nelson, British Columbia. It's seven and a half hours from Vancouver and mere minutes from nowhere in particular. Steph Hill is the author and Steph Hill is the focal point as she shows her roommate around her hometown with some pride and whole lotta more matter-of-factness. The colouring book comment: This comic is lovingly hand-drawn with warmth, soft tones and a shitload of heart. It appears that Hill wants to document her efforts to tour guide but she also wants to document the journey and the emotions, thoughts, realizations that encase the entire effort. It's really personal and touching. The natural world looms large. The mountains and dense forests of BC play the supporting cast or maybe centre stage. Hill and her roommate journey within, and even once they reach town, it doesn't really mask the fact that they're surrounded by natural life and not really that much human life. It's universal in theme but also wholly specific because Nelson is a spot few of us will ever see. That's why *Roadtrip to Nelson* works and works well. (Cam Gordon)

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Super Crappy Comix

Comic, Rebecca Roher, 16 pgs, RebeccaRoherArt.blogspot.ca

Self-deprecation is a thing that sometimes exists in the zine world. It shouldn't here: These comics are fun. *Super Crappy Comix* (*SCC*) was created by Rebecca Roher during the Toronto Library Comics Jam, a hackathon-ish type event where you're hacking pencils and paper instead of code, I guess. *SCC* seems like it might speak most clearly to a high school audience. Subject matter includes field trips, Bar Mitzvahs, babysitting and art class. Nothing goes too in-depth which is totally fine because ultimately, this zine is about Rebecca herself (I think). She shares various micro-observations, preferences, fears and loves. Art is central here, as is her love for drawing. Everything is etched out quickly which gives an immediacy to the work, especially knowing that she was working "against the clock". Luckily, unlike its title, *SCC* never puts itself down within its pages. Instead, it celebrates itself with some drawings to back things up. That's kinda it. (Cam Gordon)

The First Picture I Ever Took of You

Photo zine, Isolde Woudstra, 28 pgs, isoldewoudstra.com, € 5 plus shipping

This photo zine is amazing. *The First Picture I Ever Took of You* reads like a music dork's scrapbook and it's wildly intimate. This zine contains a dozen or so portraits of various musical men and women, reproduced and printed in staggering detail. In saying this, I'm not talking resolution but tone and texture: it feels incredibly real and again, very intimate. With all photos shot in and around various cities in the Netherlands, there is a Dutch modesty and sensibility at work here. Nothing rocks. Nothing parties. Instead, everything is subtle in a really admirable way. In terms of the artists featured, many might be unknown to North American audiences, although Grimes, Chelsea Wolfe and the War on Drugs' Adam Granduciel do appear. The relative fame of each photo subject is completely irrelevant. This is because the true captions and context sit in the handwritten write-ups that accompany each photo set and in the sheer starkness and

from Locus Zine, various

Reviewed on page 34

beauty of the photos themselves. This is well worth a purchase if you're at all into music or photography or both. Creator Isolde Woudstra is clearly a talent and this zine is immediately engrossing. (Cam Gordon)

You, Monster!

Comic, Brian Roppel, 20 pgs, brian@brianroppel.com, $10

In the comic world, the line between cute and grotesque can sometimes be a mere squiggle. Such is the case with *You, Monster!*, a new collection of bite-sized comics that is 80% super cute and 20% fuckin' gross. Brian Roppel is the author and illustrator. He seems really hyper — in a good way. Roppel's characters and creatures run amok over 20 pages, each strip wrapping up in a page or so. Themes like ego and self-esteem are thrown out there, but done so in a way that's playful yet thoughtful. It's smart when it wants to be and consciously not smart at times too (which is also cool). The other great thing about *You, Monster!* is its attention to detail, with hundreds of characters jammed into these cells. Personally, I enjoyed the rhetorical responses to bad cliches like "You can't have your cake and eat it too". Responses are both written and illustrated. Both kick considerable ass. On the whole, this comic seems kinda satirical at times and almost feels a bit like a slightly skewed edition of *MAD Magazine* but from a planet where there's nothing to parody. Instead, it seems that *You, Monster!* may just be jabbing at inner monologues and social conventions and the like. The targets might be more universal which is precisely why this is a fun, compelling read that you'll likely be compelled to read (more than once. (Cam Gordon)

LITZINES AND CHAPBOOKS

The Great Hoop Dance

Chapbook, Sharon Berg, 24 pgs, Big Pond Rumours, big-pond-rumours.com, $12

Sharon Berg's private press, Big Pond Rumours, re-prints a poetic essay from 1988 which, in her own words, "is meant to interpret the teachings [she] received on First Nations Ontology from James Dumont," a professor at Laurentian University. "The Great Hoop Dance" is less of an active interpretation than it is a poetic re-telling, and is as strong or weak as one would expect of a short poetry zine making this kind of attempt.

More of an educational text than a serious development or modern contextualization of mythic ontology, "The Great Hoop Dance" is framed for the settler-reader, as is evidenced in its introductory essay which variously offers the history of European settlers recording the Ojibwe creation-story from the biases of their own worldview, and somewhat contentiously, describes the European poets who took on the brunt of this task as "usually a marginalized human being [himself,] who lives on the perimeter of their own society, turning back to reflect upon the meaning of the human condition within that group". It is clear that Berg sees the eightfold "poetic essay" that follows as somehow engaging this history, though it is unclear from which standpoint, and to what intended effect.

The poems themselves are rather conservative. Confined to the rigid descriptions of Ojibwe belief systems, Berg's verse rarely extends beyond such iconography as "the Great Circle, | four seasons in their cycle, | blossoms, seed, snow cover and sprout, | wigwam, tipi, even the igloo | circling people with warmth". This is not to say the Berg's treatment of the material does not demonstrate a degree of passion, but it is to say that it rarely plays with readerly expectations. (Joel W. Vaughan)

I Wanted to Be the Knife

Chapbook, Sara Sutterlin, 56 pgs, Metatron, onmetatron.org, $13

You may never encounter a more matter-of-fact potty mouth. The first line of this collection: "Eating a bagel and being a cunt."

I Wanted to Be the Knife isn't all swears and anger, though Sara Sutterlin uses a decent amount of each to set the tone. The dark cloud hanging over these poems can be grating, but Sutterlin remains playful in the midst of it, connecting one verse to the next with subtle jokes and ensuring she never takes herself too seriously. She injects occasional deep thoughts, as well: "Men are capable of Obsession more often than Love."

Sutterlin's poems jump feverishly though scenes of desperation — "pick me and my skin, pick me" — and depression: "Cursing all the Christmas tea gift boxes from people who pity me." They're emotionally all over the map, but resignation and regret are sentiments that come around often: "I'm softening, / like butter. / I WANTED TO BE THE KNIFE."

I Wanted to Be the Knife was originally published as a much smaller collection; this beefed-up version (featuring 28 new poems) was endorsed after the original "took the poetry world by storm, selling over 500 units" (sadly, that is not a hyperbolic statement). (Scott Bryson)

My Friend Goo #2

Litzine, Audrey, jewellerytears@gmail.com, $5

Remember a few years ago when the film *The Tree of Life* came out? It was an epic, impressionistic symphony; Terrence Malick's first film in years. It had an

overwrought and dramatic trailer and at the time critics were talking about how moving and potent this masterpiece of 21st century cinema was. I watched it on my laptop in Guelph and, while I could see the obvious skill and talent that went into the film, I personally couldn't do anything with it.

That's a little bit how I feel about issue 2 of *My Friend Goo*, a cut-and-paste labour of love dedicated to queer kids who grew up in the '90s. It takes the form of a wistful letter addressed to an unnamed old friend looking back at high school with ample references to divorced parents, treehouses, Morrissey, and grunge music. The zine is constructed with care and I'm sure it will touch someone deeply but for me it felt a little like watching Sean Penn squinting through an urban landscape while Zbigniew Preisner's musical score soars into a dramatic climax until I have my head in my hands wondering: "What the heck it is people love so much about this?"

Sorry, back to the zine. *My Friend Goo* is not just a zine about the '90s, it looks like the '90s. The typewriter font is interspersed with hand-scrawled lettering for an effect that's more personal than just straight text. There are hearts and smudgy photocopied images that will bring you back to your high school days when zines like *Fuzzy Heads Are Better* and *Kiss Machine* ruled the day. So if you think you're up for an emotive, 90s-tinged trip down memory lane with Audrey, send them an email. (Chris Landry)

Playdate

Chapbook, Allison LaSorda, .com, 12 pgs, allisonlasorda.com / anstrutherpress.com, $10

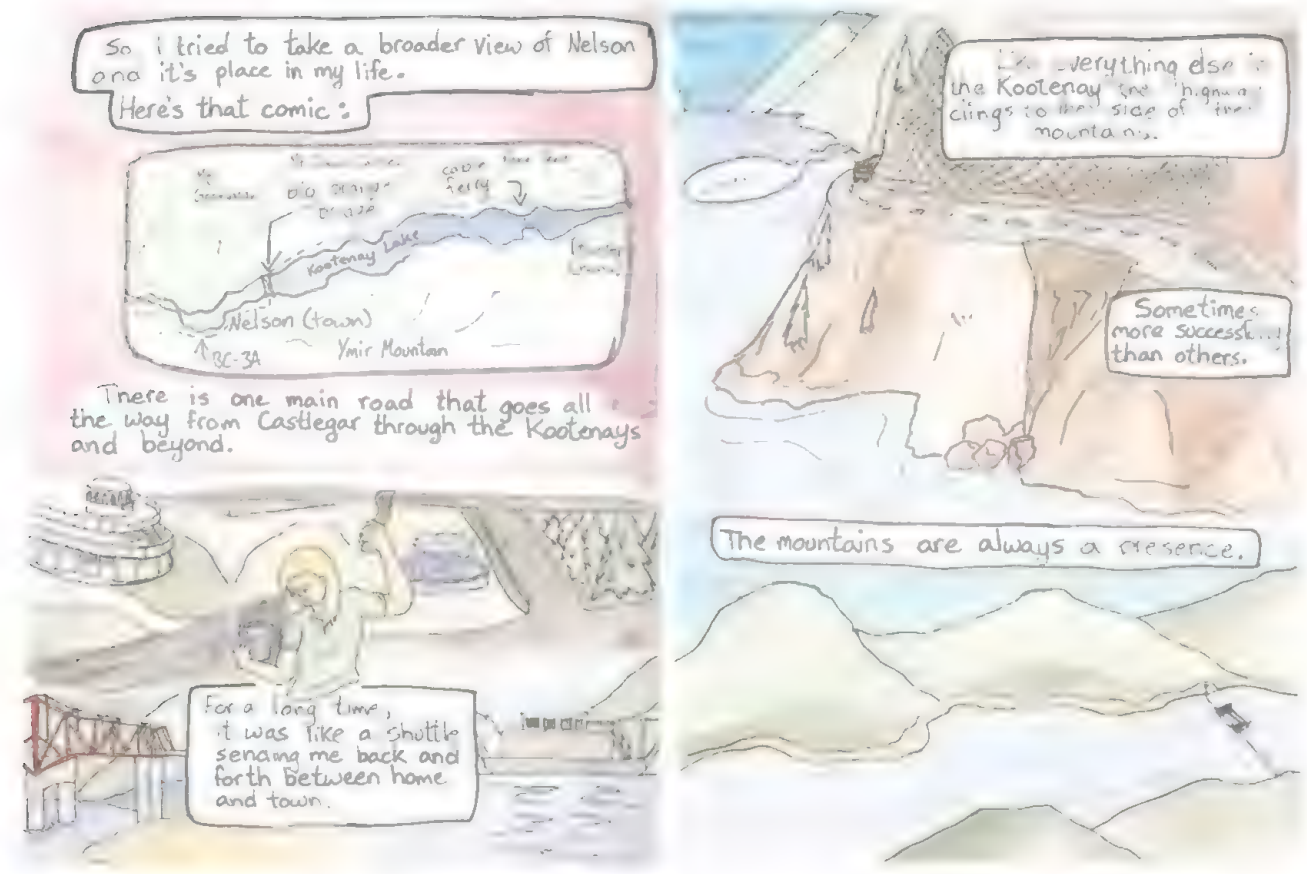
Another hot one from Anstruther Press: Allison LaSorda's *Playdate* speaks with a quaint voice, and in a manner of reverie, of both simplistic moments as well as momentous ideals.

And true to the text's name, LaSorda douses memories throughout in a blanket of playfulness, some crocheted form of comedic aloof-itude. "If you were still mine, / my sweet jubilee, I'd bother / to come up with sap to spew." I love this passage. The lines kinda crept up on me. Like an intertextual double take, my eyes stumbled in a moment of romanticized and self-involved reading: O, were this a love poem, that I could satisfy my thirst for some projected sensuous experience. These are the type of lines that hope to be read aloud and yet, contrarily, lose meaning when heard audibly. Presentation is deceiving; articulation can be more so.

Additionally, LaSorda's does a great job at presenting commonplace images with reference to traditionally-ingrained aesthetics, such as those found in the dusky

Excerpts

from RoadTrip to Nelson by Steph Hill


So I tried to take a broader view of Nelson and it's place in my life.
Here's that comic:
Kootenay Lake
Nelson (town)
BC-3A
Ymir Mountain
There is one main road that goes all the way from Castlegar through the Kootenays and beyond.
Everything else in the Kootenay and Nelson clings to the side of the mountains.
Sometimes more successful than others.
The mountains are always a presence.
For a long time, it was like a shuttle sending me back and forth between home and town.

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humanities seminar rooms of yesteryear. "Everything the sun touched / turned rancid ... On a guided tour, / I learned that when the sun shines / on leather wallpaper, it is ruined / slowly over time, as everything is. / So you see, even in the lap / of Baroque luxury / you cannot escape daylight."

This is serious poetry for the semi-sarcastic and outwardly analytical. LaSorda succeeds in saying exactly what she wants about herself without falling into self-exploratory quicksand. Yes, *Playdate* belongs to a world of personal poetics, but still there is a healthy amount of finger-shakes and eye-rolls scattered throughout. (Jeff Low)

Poetry Is Dead

Poetry journal, Ben Rawluk (editor), issue 13, 64 pgs, poetryisdead.ca, $6

For this themed 13th issue, submitters were given a choice: send prose poetry, poems about superheroes, or a combination of the two.

Several writers approached the task by bringing a dose of reality to the comic book world. In a prose poem about the Joker, Kim Fu conjures a room with a "wall of Robins" (the Joker has killed a few Robins over the years), where mounted sidekick heads haunt and taunt him. In Aaron Giovannone's poem about the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, we find Leonardo contemplating deeper problems than we're used to: "I'm unaccustomed to this age — can't tell / the drug-afflicted from the poets."

While the superhero writing rarely disappointed, the stand-out pieces from this issue are an enigmatic sermon from Gary Barwin, who blames alien babies for all of his woes — "Alien babies, you've given me migraines and made me forget how to play saxophone." — and a prose poem from Sina Queyras that presents parenthood from the perspective of great thinkers: Samuel Beckett; Jacques Derrida and Anne Carson.

The only negative for this issue: the several art contributions don't match the theme. It's understandable that the magazine can't reproduce trademarked characters, but a few generic superheroes would have been welcomed. (Scott Bryson)

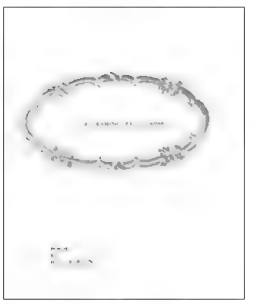
PTSD south beach

Chapbook, Puneet Dutt, 24 pgs, Grey Borders Books, greyborders.com, $5

A finalist for the 2016 Breitling Chapbook Prize, Puneet Dutt's book is a fine collection of poems, coherently selected to straddle both a politically informed and nostalgically personal perspective. As the post-traumatic stress disorder of the title would suggest, *PTSD south beach* projects organized violence, war, as a given, but then filters it through the harrowing experience of the individual.

An immediate positioning of the first person in relation to combat, the chapbook's first poem "what do i know of war?" introduces a climate of omnipresent aggression; no one is safe; a person can innocently leave home in the morning to end up in "a blue body bag." In a world of guns, drones, forces, troops, military, screams, fighting...the insistence on measuring extremity through the personal both counteracts the danger of desensitization and inserts a lyrical voice into the poems. In "coordinates," a poem about separation, the distance between locations is quantified through "how far / from daughter / from mother / from herself she will be / from me." The sad irony is, of course, that although "there is always war," "no one ever" wants to be affected by it.

A significant formal choice, Dutt cuts out, cuts up and leaves scars throughout her writing. For example, she insinuates a political agenda, but doesn't articulate a stance, rather expecting the reader to interpret the innuendo of blanks: "blogs read: Washington's Uneasy Partnership With Tehran / or _____" Similarly, she syntactically disintegrates a moment of violence: "scarring the seams of our backs / ask / can we this our own sun give." Through excision and confusion, Dutt is able to poetically convey the force of extremity. (Klara du Plessis)



Reframing Paul Cadmus

Chapbook, John Barton, 24 pgs, above/ground press, abovegroundpress.blogspot.ca, $5

Printed 7″ x 8.5″, John Barton presents, here, a sizable, not to mention *memorable* collection of ekphrastic poetry (ekphrastic is defined as verbal art about other art.) Each of Barton's eleven poems printed herein demonstrates not only an intense familiarity with the visual work of Paul Cadmus, but a unique ability to transform his paintings into sensual narratives, all of which connect into a near-seamless collection that demands to be read aloud.

For a reader generally unfamiliar with Cadmus's work, I am surprised to feel such a visceral connection with his subjects through the dancing words of Barton's interpretive hand. This speaks to the skill of the writer, and his ability not only to re-tell Cadmus's implied narrative, but to develop it into an entity *more* than its original author conceived. This is the juice of ekphrastic poetry!

Take, for example, Barton's textual sketching-over of Cadmus's 1935

"Gilding the Acrobats": "Untouchable — For the duration, a man among many/ Adept at plummeting down To earth A man up-close So ordinary/A man of ordinary looks". Barton's words, here, not only describe the events of the painting, but they *enact* them, the poem becoming acrobatic itself. A similar action marks the conclusion of a description of the 1987 "The House That Jack Built," which reads as follows: "Kamikaze-like across his large stubborn/Shoulders while, unasphyxiated, he carries/On reading, indolent and immune to fire/Story after news story conflagrating/In flashes abou him, the drifting/Tatters tamped in his damp coiled hair" [22]. The stoic eroticism of so many of Cadmus's figures comes alive in Barton's lexicon, perhaps even moreso in the latter than it does in the former. What results is a chapbook which must be consumed. (Joel W. Vaughan)

Section 8 Magazine #33: Making Faces

(Something like a) Chapbook, Various, section8magazine.com, 40 pgs

Wake up, sheeple!!! This Seattle-based compilation zine (billing itself as a zine for "artists, intellectuals and global thinkers") is an unwelcome reminder that the DIY arts are not safe from misogynist buffoons or clichéd aesthetics. See: the most notable buffoon, Michael Marrotti — "an author from Pittsburgh using words instead of violence to mitigate the suffering of life in a callous world of redundancy." O, philanthropic bard! To follow: an excerpt from Marotti's "Agnostic Front Live in Pittsburgh" — "I've been blessed with slut after slut (courtesy of Dormont) and made the best out of it. Word quickly spread of my hard drinking, good times and ass kickings. Women in Dormont ate that shit up. I guess in a way it broke up the monotony of their redundant lives." Review: I give this story 0.5 dead Bukowskis out of 5. (Bitter old hardcore dudes and machismo poets fuck off!!!)

Sass aside, reading this zine was such a disheartening experience. *Section 8 Magazine*, you're making it pretty hard for us to give you the benefit of the doubt here. But I suppose, out of context and ironically misconstrued, Marrotti's own words have some merit: "Bad examples can be just as beneficial as good ones." (Jeff Low)

from The First Picture I Ever Took of You by Isolde Woudstra

reviewed on page 36

Shiftless (Harvester)

Chapbook, Buck Downs, 24 pgs, above/ground press, abovegroundpress.blogspot.ca, $4

Buck Downs' poetic method has been outlined in *Broken Pencil*'s review for "Touch the Donkey #11", as his work is briefly featured there, but it is worth noting here again for this interview, where the advantages and disadvantages to this approach are emphasized more heavily. "Shiftless(Harvester)" is, after all, a chapbook entirely of Downs's composition, so when his method of "brute-force typing," as he calls it, is tasked with producing the 23 short poems printed herein, their method of production is much more obvious.

In an interview with publisher rob mclennan, Downs describes his "brute-force" method as follows: "I have a little box that when I fill it with filled notebooks, I take the box and type up its whole contents . . . which I get printed as a bound galley . . . and proceed to erase/cut & paste/collage that typing into drafts." The advantages to this approach are the same to be found in more-recognized poets who, to some degree, follow a similar process (Downs himself cites Ronald Johnson and Jackson MacLow. "Shiftless(Harvester)" does garner a sort of 'ghost in the machine' kind of discombobulated affect, examples in such passages as "pee shy/& asking/for money/it's hard to feel/sad when your mouth is on fire". The chapbook confronts the issues associated with the method which produced it. However, some issues remain — namely, a resistance to settling into anything recognizable as meaning, and more noticeably a tendency towards shoehorning in association between dissociated memes to unfortunate melodrama (see: "days when you whisper | nights when you cry | [. . .] | all the burnt parts | still rule inside. [11]). "Shiftless(Harvester)" makes for a solid read, but one leaves with little more than what one began with. (Joel W. Vaughan)

Sonnets on a Night Without Love

Chapbook, Yusuf Saadi, 24 pgs, Vallum Society for Arts & Letters Education, vallummag.com, $10

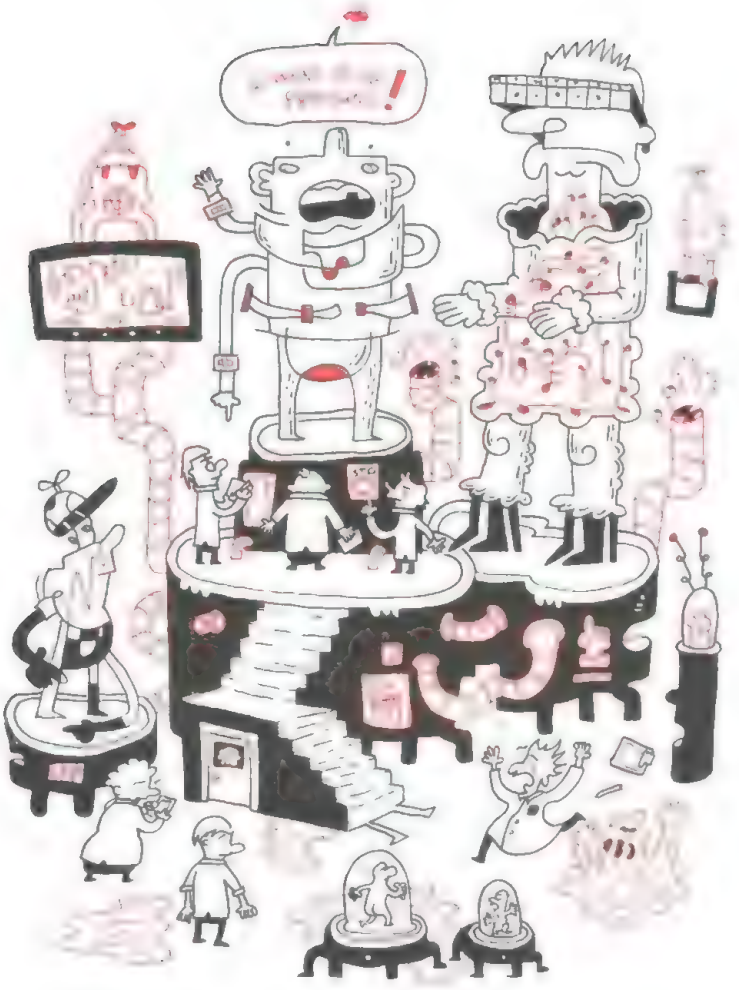
For a collection that professes to be about a night without love, the word "love" and its machinations sure make a lot of appearances. Perhaps the title is more suggestive of an effort to fill a void, rather than an attempt to evade a feeling.

These poems predominantly see Yusuf Saadi directly addressing a lover (aside from the clever "Sonnet by a Forgotten Twix Wrapper"). The intimate mood that results demands a hushed and reverent reading — like the text is being whispered in confidence. A number of literal references to quiet and rest further enforce that direction: "Silence shawls the temporal;" "Conjoined sleepers shrouded in the TV's halo."

Saadi's verse veers into mushy territory on occasion — "I glimpse your heart which nearly blinds me" — but

Excerpts

from You, Monster by Brian Roppel



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melodrama is par for the course when you're wading into this subject matter. To his credit, he consistently transcends the schmaltz by dabbling in out-of-this-world imagery: "I know a star in Andromeda broke / every colour in your heart." The prevalence of lines referencing stars, planets and particles makes this sound like a love letter from an astrophysicist. (Scott Bryson)

String Practice

Chapbook, Jan Zwicky, 36 pgs, Vallum Society for Arts & Letters Education, vallummag.com, $10

Nearly all of the poems in this collection are reprinted from previous releases, and there was no shortage of material to choose from — Jan Zwicky is an award winning writer and philosopher with a lengthy bibliography. For this chapbook, she's assembled a set of poems that are inspired by or are about music.

Several of these poems are titled with, or make mention of a particular classical composition. One need not be familiar with the tunes in question to follow along, but pianist Bruce Vogt, who penned the introduction to String Practice, suggests that if you are, you'll find that Zwicky's verses "emanate from the music physically and aurally; and in its turn, the poem invokes the piece from which it springs."

It's a believable compliment; Zwicky plays words like they're an instrument. You'd be hard pressed to find someone who employs metaphor and simile more frequently and eloquently than Zwicky does. Her writing is packed with both — always apt and never obscure — and she continually manages to find connections between events that seem so disparate that you have to wonder if anyone who came before her had even considered the association: "you are thinking / of your childhood, your long-dead father, or not / thinking so much as letting them / nudge up against you, boats / moored at the same dock on a still night." (Scott Bryson)

Three Bloody Words

Chapbook, Stephanie Bolster, 23 pgs, above/ground press,abovegroundpress.blogspot.ca, $5

This is an anniversary publication, a reissue, twenty years after the original release, celebrating Stephanie Bolster's chapbook Three Bloody Words—a sequence of poems and short paragraphs aiming to rewrite well-known fairytales from the perspective of the princess. Now with an afterword by the author, Bolster describes her feminist project, her desire "to reclaim women's narratives ... I was, simply and sincerely, claiming identity as a writer. In giving these women a voice, I was giving myself one." Modeled as retellings of fairytales, these pieces are thematically linked by their consistent exposure of the latent violence inherent to so-called children's stories—"To think they read these stories to children" being one of the poem's titles. While the fairytales are never named, the narratives are presumably so familiar to most readers that select elements are enough to cue in the reader that, for example, a man lurking in the forest, threatening a girl dressed in red, is most probably based on Little Red Riding Hood. Similarly, a girl with "snow-white skin/ blood-red cheeks, hair as black as ebony" is sufficient to position the underaged, coerced and subsequently vengeful child bride as Snow White and the Seven Dwarves. What sets Bolster's retellings apart from similar work by, for instance, Anne Sexton, is her insistence on the contemporaneous nature of the narratives. When "this guy in a suit comes & asks what's it like being in fairytales he's doing his thesis," it becomes clear that the entitled, patriarchal, often aggressive and nonconsensually-inclined archetype of the Disney prince has just changed his guise for modern times; "it was the same old story." The legendary "happily ever after" postures as the continuity of fairytale violence and inequality into the present day. (Klara du Plessis)

What I Learned in Florida

Litzine, Cary Fagan, 32 pgs., espresso-chapbooks.com, $15

Fiction and children's author Cary Fagan, collects nine precious pieces of youth memoir in *What I Learned in Florida*. Fagan's short stories employ writing that is warm and concise, but without giving short shrift to his young self's feelings and epiphanies.

Painting a picture of himself as sensitive and deep-feeling as a child, Fagan writes of his close-knit extended family, some of whom survived the Holocaust, and the palpable absences of others who didn't. He writes of sick days home with his mother, attempts at out-of-body experiences as informed by a pulp paperback, and — in the striking story that gives the collection its title — a chance encounter with a dead body and the sudden realization of mortality. Throughout all of these stories, each just two to four pages, Fagan's childhood self comes across as precociously somber and empathetic. But for all the weight of the subject matter or the coming-of-age conclusions that Fagan sketches, the writing is not overly wrought. Rather, Fagan is a tender narrator of reminiscence who makes it easy to remember and wonder with him.

Like other items available from Espresso Chapbooks, *What I Learned in Florida* is hand-sewn and bound with french flaps, with this item in a black cover. The writing, however, is the real draw. Recommended. (Joshua Barton)

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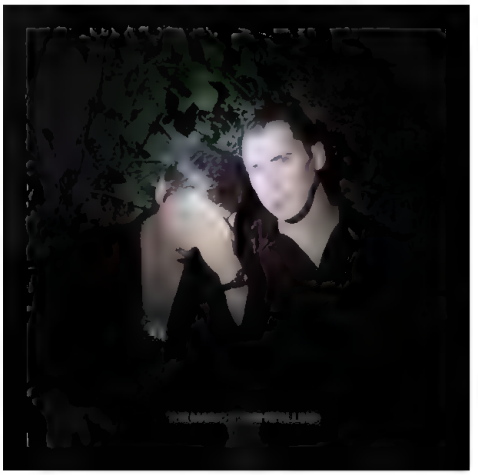


The Magic

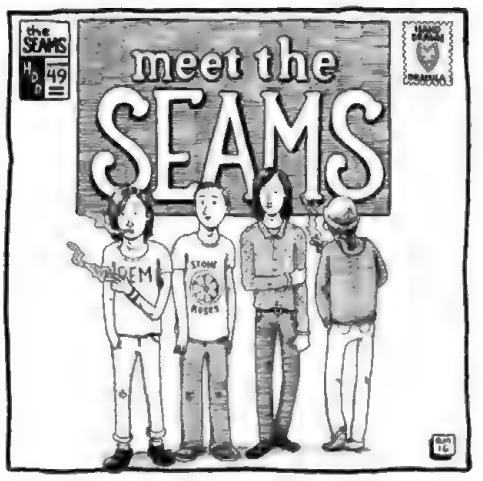
Nightfalling
Independent
themagicisreal.bandcamp.com

Regrets, insecurities and wistful mornings after are the calling cards of this second full-length from Guelph, Ontario's The Magic. Evan and Geordie Gordon have settled on a lasting identity for their sibling act, taking it in a sultry, soft rock direction (imagine a modernized Hall & Oates) that occasionally treads on the territory inhabited by their other gig, Islands. The flair that adorned their debut EP is long gone — a disappointment, for sure — but it's hard to find fault with this record's consistently passionate attitude.

Cool Ghouls

Animal Races
Empty Cellar Records
emptycellarrecords.com

This is the third full-length release from San Francisco's Cool Ghouls, and in their own estimation, they're "doing what they've always done, but in more ways and better." The quartet has been compared to everyone from Crosby, Stills & Nash to the Grateful Dead, and this time out they're suffusing a Doors vibe with a little surf and a lot of mind-bending haze. When these songs aren't occupied with lengthy instrumental intros and outros, their subject matter wavers between two extremities: joyously drinking beer and pondering the meaninglessness of everyday life.



The Seams

Meet The Seams
Hand Drawn Dracula
handdrawndracula.com

Looks like there are at least three other bands out there with the same name as this Toronto outfit — in Pennsylvania, New York and Australia. This Canadian incarnation is a coming-together of members of Elsa, WISH, Fake Palms and US Girls, and there's a refreshing earnestness at their album's core that you don't typically hear from an assemblage of experienced musicians. When they don't sound like The Delgados, circa 1995 (vigorously chasing whims, but sonically fastidious), they're channeling Kurt Vile's laid-back attitude or soaring on early-REM-like guitars. (All reviews by Scott Bryson)

Heavy Metalloid Music:

The Story of Simply Saucer by Jesse Locke

illustration by Robert Dayton

Broken Pencil is excited to share this exclusive excerpt. Written by music journalist Jesse Locke (Weird Canada), Heavy Metalloid Music *tells the story of the legendary (and underrated) Hamilton psych-punks Simply Saucer. This excerpt discusses how the band (young, scrappy and broke) collided with producer Bob Lanois in 1974 to record their seminal first album* Cyborgs Revisited.

Coasting on the excitement of their bumpy test drive, the Saucer took its next flight less than a month later. July 14th and 15th, 1974 were booked for their first recording session at Master Sound Studio. This turned out to be a basement bunker in the Ancaster, Ontario home of brothers Bob and Daniel Lanois. Daniel's story is, of course, enough for a tome of his own—he would go on to work with everyone from Brian Eno and U2 to Bob Dylan, Emmylou Harris, Willie Nelson, and Martha and the Muffins, not to mention a fantastic solo career. However, it was Bob who manned the boards for this particular session.

It's safe to say that before the session started, the musical sensibilities of Lanois and Saucer emerged from entirely different worlds. At that time, the band members remained distrustful of anyone who wasn't switched on to the heady sensibilities of their record collections. Case in point: the albums front man Edgar Breau brought as examples of the sounds he hoped to emulate were The Stooges' *Raw Power* and the Velvet Underground's *White Light/White Heat*. In turn, Lanois introduced them to his personal hero: Eagles producer Bill Szymczyk.

"I remember Bob being very serious and earnest," says Breau. "I think we went in a bit—how should I put it?—suspicious. That was hilarious because we were so young, but we wanted to check everyone out back then to see if they were into hip music and the kinds of bands we were listening to. We just felt that if they were into cool music they would be great engineers or producers, which isn't necessarily true." Master Sound Studio's client immediately prior to Simply Saucer was an environmental activist/children's entertainer by the name of Raffi.

"Rick Bissell rang my doorbell one day," remembers Lanois during an animated phone conversation. "He said, 'Look, I've got some kids and I want to record them.' So I said, 'Okay, send them over!' The band and I got together, and they played me a few things. They were really skinny. Each one weighed a hundred pounds or maybe a hundred and ten at the heaviest. I was an old guy at twenty-five then, and they were younger, maybe twenty. I thought, 'That's okay. I don't care if they're suspicious of me. I think I fucking like these kids!'"

Both the band and their would-be producer were incredibly green at this point, but everyone went in with excitement. These sessions were a raw, off the floor shamble with the only overdubs coming from DeMerchant's tambourine and Breau's instantly recognizable acoustic guitar on "Bullet Proof Nothing." His semi- finalized lyrics (influenced by sci-fi, comic books, countercultural writers and first-hand experiences with the East Side street-life) were written in a Beat-style stream of unconsciousness shortly before stepping up to the mic. "

The six songs that would end up filling out side one of *Cyborgs Revisited* are some of the most unhinged post-Velvets/ pre-Voidoids proto-punk expressions ever laid to tape. These recordings initially intended as a demo burst from the seams with blitzkrieg guitars, submachine snare drums, and the electronic dreams of Simply Saucer's own metal machine maniac. To bottle this lightning, Lanois remembers his strategy of feeding the hungry musicians and simply trying to stay one step ahead with his gear at the ready. "It was live off the floor, and we just let it rip!" he exclaims.

"When you're twenty-five years old and you've basically been brought up in poverty, outside of the support of your mother, you don't fuck around when someone you like comes by," he continues. "I wasn't messing around, even though those guys might have just been thinking this was a passing thing, recording what they thought of as a demo. That word's not really used anymore, and I've always abhorred it, even when I was a kid. I wasn't going to let those kids out of there until we came up with a fucking masterpiece, man."

Buy the book at **eternalcavalierpress.com**.

FICTION

The Book of Endless Sleepovers

Henry Hoke, pgs, Civil Coping Mechanisms, 150pgs, copingmechanisms.net, $15.95

Do you remember what it was like to be, say, nine years old? Or nine and three quarters? Sure, you do. But do you?

Henry Hoke's ethereal debut pitches a blanket fort on the border between memory and the personal histories we wish for. Stories (or chapters) are composed of vignettes, prose poems, telegraphic description snacks. Each page gently populates a landscape ruled by kid logic, serial gentle awakenings and short-sighted affect.

In the section titled "The Death of Every Pet" the narrator indeed describes the deaths of pets both existent and non-existent without too much differentiation. In "Narration for an Endangered Species" a child-like fascination with the so-called Banshee Whale makes for a mythological poetry: "It's been theorized that the Banshee can only cry when out of earshot. If the Banshee whale wails and there's no one around to record it.... In this case, what could extinction possibly mean?"

Some sections introduce names only to leave them behind as their momentary importance fades. Other characters hover and come back with increasing intimacy. Although brothers and pets are especially cherished throughout the book, the opening and closing sections of the book deal with Tom and Huck and their lilting, somewhat ambiguous pubescent romance and best friend adventures. Indeed, the book begins with a graffito, the theoretical phrase: "What If Tom and Huck Fucked?"

There's something really sweet, and awfully familiar about the Tom and Huck episodes:

"Tom and Huck are on their backs in the grass again.

Huck says he can't wait to have kids, so he can beat them.

Tom tries to imagine what their children would look like.

How many times can you write the word "pussy" in a book of Mad Libs?

Tonight we're going to find out. By god."

The dark honesty of adolescence punctures and deflates the bubbles of nostalgia and timelessness that arise throughout the book. In "Grand Rapids," something very bad happens to a child. Beloved mothers and pets die. Characters, much like us readers, don't know how to talk about these things very well.

Henry Hoke does know how. He does it in this book, over and over. through experiment and self-exposure. The writing in The Book of Endless Sleepovers is elusive but trustworthy, exactly as it ought to be. Utterly awesome. (Jonathan Valelly)

The Conjoined

Jen Sookfong Lee, 264 pgs, ECW Press, ecwpress.com, $18.95.

In Jen Sookfong Lee's *The Conjoined*, the death of Jessica Campbell's mother Donna leads to the discovery of two dead girls at the bottom of a basement freezer. The girls, Jaime and Casey Cheng, were once Donna's troubled foster children in the late eighties. They suddenly vanish, leading all to believe that they'd just run away and allowing their mysterious deaths to go overlooked and forgotten for nearly thirty years. While the premise sounds like a crime story or a murder mystery, Lee's novel is neither. *The Conjoined* is, in actuality, a story of forgotten lives and the uncaring reality of a social system.

Upon discovering the Cheng sisters' bodies, Jessica begins investigating their lives, as well as Donna's, through agency files and her own memories. Hoping to find a clue as to how they ended up in her mother's freezer, Jessica instead, is confronted by the weak illusion of a functioning, supportive society. In actuality, Casey and Jaime fell between the cracks, and their lives got lost in a sea of thousands just like them. Through Donna, Sookfong Lee is careful not to demonize the system or the people who operate within it. Rather, she portrays the most crucial mechanisms of society as overworked, tired, and broken as the people they're meant to help.

The greatest strength of Sookfong Lee's novel is the absolute humanization of her characters, particularly when we get into the heads of Donna's mother Beth, and Casey and Jaime's mother Ginny. On the surface they are neglectful, cold, and unfit for parenting. In reality, their lives reveal the heart-breaking trials of motherhood — women desperately trying to keep it all together for the love of their children, then ultimately failing in the eyes of unforgiving social and legal institutions. Even Wayne, who on the surface appears to be a predator, is just as stupid and afflcited as any other human in the novel.

The Conjoined is a fantastic read, though it offers little in the way of a conclusion. The lack of a satisfying ending drives home how incomplete the lives of

Casey and Jaime remain, and reminds us that sometimes, things end without explanation. (Rayna Livingstone-Lang)

The Hidden Keys

Andre Alexis, 230 pgs, Coach House Books, chbooks.com, $19.95

The most recent novel by Giller Award winner Andre Alexis is the story of a treasure hunt featuring two unlikely friends, at least on the surface. Tancred Palieri is an honourable thief from Toronto's Parkdale neighbourhood. After Tancred befriends Willow, an aging drug user, she entrusts Tancred with an incredible task. See, Willow is a member of the wealthy Azarian family and is, in all actuality, very rich despite being an addict. When her father passed away, he bequeathed to each of his five children a keepsake. Willow, who shared an affinity for puzzles with her father, believes that each of the treasures is a clue that will lead to a massive fortune. Willow enlists Tancred to help her in this unusual quest shortly before her death. Being a man of honour, he resolves to complete his friend's last request.

I was immediately wrapped up in Alexis's depiction of one of Toronto's grittiest (and most rapidly changing, for better or for worse) neighbourhoods, as well as it's colourful and often shady, old-soul residents and characters. The cast of characters are fully explored and realized humans, the prose was eloquent but simplistic, and the Toronto scenery had me swelling with hometown pride.

What really got to me about this book was Tancred's dedication to Willow's request. The cliché of a thief with a heart of gold is everpresent but, with Alexis's incredible skill as a writer, Tancred's character is beyond a simple archetype. He appears to steal because he's good at it, and has a set of morals that keep him in that grey area between what one might call good and bad. While the mystery of the Azarian keepsakes kept me questioning the puzzle and its meaning, it often feels as if Tancred is like a dog chasing a car that he may very well catch and won't have any idea what to do with it. What stands true in his quest is his promise to his friend. There is something to that kind of morality that makes that effort worth while, even when there isn't much to gain.

In the end, *The Hidden Keys* is a reminder that integrity is worth more than any monetary gain. (Rayna Livingstone-Lang)

Somewhere a Long and Happy Life Probably Awaits You

Jill Sexsmith, 160 pgs, ARP Publishing, arpbooks.org, $18.95

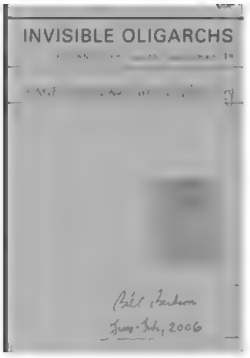
Too many of the characters in Jill Sexsmith's first story collection reduce the complexity of neurosis to little more than silliness, forcing the reader to contend with what an earlier era might have labeled oddballs. At first I was unable to invest i`n and relate to what I felt were mere stick figures, yet I came to accept them as a valid outlines matching Sexsmith's surreal plotting and settings. Weakness or eccentricity is forefront, such that that your eventual sympathy isn't diverted from what makes each character vulnerable.

Sensory descriptions are economical, sharp, and bright when needed: "Deep tunnels branch off in every direction. The walls are opalescent creams, bleeding into reds and green. She runs her hand over it, rough like an oyster shell." At its too-rare best, characterization is combined with story and setting, managing to climb to beauty: "In the morning, she was writing on their dorm room window, slowly blocking out the light. Tulip was disappointed the formulas now covered all four walls, which meant, at some point in the night, Bea had been standing over her while she slept."

Many of the stories venture past comic relief into screwball humour, but some are exceptionally touching. As for the former, 'A Box Full of Wildebeest', is repetitive and frivolous; I sought a deeper meaning, but saw nothing beyond the chuckle of a hypochondriacal mother imposing upon her perennially vacationing daughter. 'Airplanes Couldn't be Happier in Turbulence' embodies what I liked least and most about Jill Sexsmith's writing. In it, Frank, an actuary who looks at life using a boring predictable mathematics, is inexplicably a bigot. For most of the story, I also found the protagonist, Madison, to be a stick figure. Then, somehow, the ending arrives in perfect odd harmony with Madison, who finally blooms when making a self-realizing decision. The next story, 'You Cry Ugly', combines a great concept and a well-drawn grandmother-granddaughter combination heading toward an emotional ending involving the daughter/mother connecting them.

Thanks to my (perhaps narrow) tastes, Sexsmith faced an uphill battle with me... I concede. (Norman Feliks)

POETRY



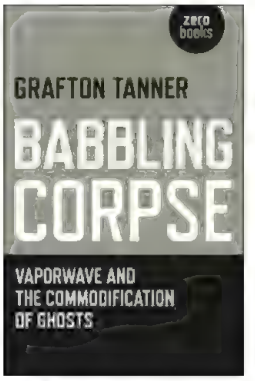
Invisible Oligarchs

Chapbook, Bill Berkson, uglyducklingpresse.org, 71 pgs, $14

"PUT YOUR ICON / IN A CORNER / PRAY" — Bill Berkson's *Invisible Oligarchs* is an incomplete and rather haphazard artifact, which peers, however briefly, into the "the Great Russian Soul." It's a collection of letters, vague lists, newspaper clippings, scans of hotel keys, and other memorabilia, all jotted down not for the sake of memory, but mere documentation. And it reads like a slap-dashed documentary, but in the best way possible.

Invisible Oligarchs follows Berkson and friends as they travel through Basel, Copenhagen, Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Helsinki in 2006. Berkson might be the proprietor of this collection, but there are many voices throughout: Kate Sutton, *The Moscow Times*, Wrigley's Doublemint Sugarfree Gum®, and the ghost of Russian literary history's past. It's high-brow and yet still lingers somewhat aloof like a fly on the (Russian) wall. "In the Kremlin, Cathedral of the Annunciation, four black-robed monks from Georgia sing — 'and everyone /and I stopped breathing/' ... Absurd Areoflot delay on tarmac: 45 minutes in the cabin, packed, no air, no air conditioning, heavy heat. Finally, 'even' the Russians complain; fans come on." It's a nice alternative to the self-lubricating stream of academic histori-cultural discourse. Is it as informative? Nope. But it's way more expressive. *Invisible Oligarchs* speaks of aesthetics within the parameters of its own aesthetic context. And therein lies the power of zines, chapbooks, notebooks, and the like. (Jeff Low)

NON-FICTION



Babbling Corpse: Vaporwave and the Commodification of Ghosts

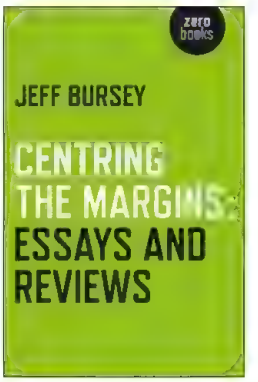
Grafton Tanner, 84 pgs, zero books, zero-books.net, $14.95 US

zero books has become well-known for its quick-to-consume pop-critical texts, and this is likely for good reason. Running against ECW Press's formidable *Pop Classics* series, or Bloomsbury's widely-successful *33⅓*, zero has managed to stake ground in a contested field, and manages this by towing the thin line which exists between academic-essay and online binge-reading. Think *Pitchfork*, but with 11 pages of Chicago-Style endnotes; here lies *Babbling Corpse: Vaporwave and the Commodification of Ghosts*. Well-researched and immensely absorbing, Grafton Tanner's fervid essay about this post-2010 electronic music movement bumps against many of the typical challenges associated with a scholar's passion-project.

For 72 pages of content, *Babbling Corpse* covers a lot of ground. Setting the stage with a promise to argue that "vaporwave is the musical product of a culture plagued by trauma and regression in late capitalism" [xi], the reader is not only treated to a short history of vaporwave as a genre, but also how it fits into music history at-large (see: a strange combination of Muzak & Punk), Western culture (see: anti-capitalist), and art (see: a Freudian reading into Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* and Drew Goddard & Joss Whedon's *The Cabin in the Woods* which, surprisingly, rings true).

Tanner is at his strongest when setting off. *Babbling Corpse*'s first two chapters deal with the music directly, and the argument feels most at home when working with aesthetics and direct references to artists, however unknown they may be. The piece loses a little steam when diving into the mud of theory—a quagmire often easier for the scholar to grasp than the reader. This manoeuvre is necessary for Tanner to pull off his soap-box finale, however, where vaporwave becomes a revolutionary "way out of this [post 9/11 cultural] nightmare. It might then be forgiven.

Given its length-to-interest ratio, I might go as far as to give *Babbling Corpse* three or four stars . It is certainly worth the read. (Joel W. Vaughan)



Centring the Margins: Essays and Reviews

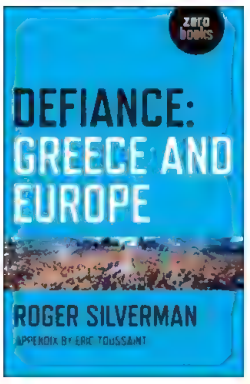
Jeff Bursey, 189 pgs, zero books, zero-books.net

As Jeff Bursey contends, we are endlessly taught that, "literature contains singular imagery, the perfect word lodged in its perfect spot, rounded characters, believable settings, a confident narrative (if not a confident narrator)." The stuffy English Lit cannon morphed into a similarly narrow mainstream publishing consensus. As a result, alternative styles of writing, which Bursey considers innovative, are tarred with the warning term, "experimental."

Bursey's crusade can be a smidge too

present, yet it's often framed in an eye-opening way, such as when he notes that for typical critical writing, "[t]he excitement will be intellectual, but won't commit someone's blood and soul to the works, which [William] Vollmann, with Steinbeck in mind, has written from the fibre of his being, as used to be said before the author supposedly disappeared." Here Bursey reminds us that there isn't only one way to write and that readers may be rewarded for delving into the unfamiliar. The strength of this collection is that it drives us to seek out neglected voices, even if it means having to read an occasional paragraph twice before we get it. Bursey inspires us to seek out important writing instead of settling for the typical and easy to digest.

If there is a weakness, aside from some unclear sentences, it is that a wide variety of works are looked at through a personal lens informed by an ironically narrow spectrum of writers. For instance, Bursey compares all sorts of people to Henry Miller, Miller representing his literary awakening. Other favoured reference points are Thomas Pynchon, the Powys brothers, Dos Passos — and all sorts of stories are referred to as Oulipian. On the other hand, the wide variety of topics covered made a consistent measuring stick a welcome tool. (Norman Feliks)



Defiance: Greece and Europe

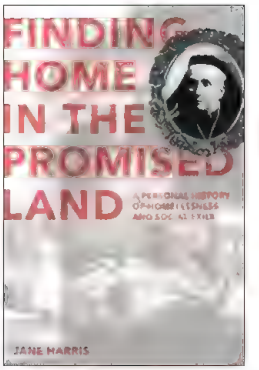
Roger Silverman, 262 pages, Zero Books, zero-books.net

I've often felt, when trying to convince conservatives of the evils of capitalism, that my arguments have been tarnished in advance by the climate created by the lazy-if-correct opinions of my peers. Given the conspicuous — much less the hidden — crimes of big business and its political allies, people of a progressive bent have become so complacent in their opposition that self-righteousness has become our default. Reading Roger Silverman's current book on the Greek economic fiasco reminded me of the importance of being rigorous even if you're certain you're right.

The writing is rousing, a fist punching the sky in the solar plexus. You get the voice of an angry man who witnessed something in Greece, defrauded and impoverished by capitalism, which compelled him to speak out. Upton Sinclair comes to mind. There are moments that the impassive way historians are supposed to write can no longer contain Silverman's pleas for action. He describes the austerity measures lenders forced upon Greece as "a laboratory experiment conducted on the living body of the Greek nation to test out how far it could withstand the trauma of ever more drastic surgical amputation." He describes quasi-democratic political dynasties as "tinged with the faint afterglow reflected by the yearnings for liberation of generations gone by."

It is interesting to consider whether the book is truth-seeking, versus weakened by bias, given that its socialist agenda is on full display. Unashamedly polemical, it smacks axiomatic that the book would compromise on truth, yet Silverman earns his right to preach by providing a vast knowledge of Greek and European history. I questioned conventional historiography; maybe history should be openly polemical instead of a pretended objectivity serving a tacit personal or vested interest.

Silverman bucks our contemporary trend of implying rather than stating ethics. He does not leave it up to you to draw your own conclusions; he gave you the facts for a reason. If you want to floor your class enemies with specifics instead of feeling pointlessly smug, right but not knowing why, read this book. (Norman Feliks)



Finding Home in the Promised Land: A Personal History of Homelessness and Social Exile

by Jane Harris. 192 pgs, J. Gordon Shillingford Publishing, jgshillingford.com. $22.95

"I am only here because I refused to give up my last smidge of hope," writes Jane Harris in her second book, *Finding Home in the Promised Land*, a memoir of her recent experience of homelessness and poverty. Following a horrific incident of domestic violence that leaves her with a severe brain injury and an uncertain future, Harris must turn to the social welfare system for help. She quickly discovers, however, that what she deems the "poverty industry" — made up of social service agencies such as soup kitchens, food banks, and shelters—fosters cycles of dependence rather than offering long-term solutions to lift individuals out of hardship. Stigma towards the poor and homeless still prevails, and today's complex bureaucratic systems can be difficult and frustrating to navigate for those seeking assistance when they need it the most. Harris draws parallels between her story and that of her ancestors, Scottish immigrants who lived in rural southwestern Ontario in the mid-1800s and teetered precariously on the verge of poverty while toiling as agricultural and domestic laborers. The recurring theme, she notes, is that those without social safety nets who experience trauma or loss have historically and continue to fall through the cracks.

Harris provides a disheartening glimpse into what it is like to have to start anew after experiencing devastating

trauma, weaving personal and family history alongside historical and contemporary perspectives on poverty. Based on her own lived experience, she passionately advocates for affordable housing, food security, and instituting a guaranteed annual income, arguing that these initiatives will help restore independence so individuals do not have to rely on social service organizations for the rest of their lives. Harris' insightful commentary is thought-provoking and engaging, emphasizing the ways in which we must protect, defend, and uplift the most marginalized members of our community. (Melissa Hergott)

Price Paid: The Fight For First Nations Survival

Bev Sellars, with contributions from Hemas Kla-Lee-Lee Kla, 211 pages, Talonbooks Publishing, talonbooks.com

The author of 2013's *They Called Me Number One: Secrets and Survival at an Indian Residential School*, Bev Sellars has written *Price Paid* to educate us about the Canadian history of injustice against First Nations peoples. Sellars is perfectly placed to write on this subject; she possesses a degree in both history and law, served twice as Xat'súll chief, and was on the B.C. Treaty Council from 2003 to 2009. Referencing her own experiences in her community in northern British Columbia, she draws on her extensive knowledge of the challenges of the the Secwepemc Nation which the Xat'súll are a part of. The book is built from the community level up into the broader history of Canada. Melding the social and political, she demonstrates how legislation developed over time and what the disastrous results were for First Nations peoples.

Sellars asks us to look at our history through a different lens: "Canada projects an international reputation that does not match the reality at home." She opens each chapter with a house as a metaphor for Canada. For example: "What if you are forced to appeal to newcomer institutions and laws to try to get your house back?" Stern without being pessimistic, the chapters themselves provide ample political data to support the author's assertions. Sellars writes that, as "ugly as it may be sometimes, we cannot do a proper job of examining history without looking at the whole picture."

The readable yet data-rich density of this book is ideal in that it provides the minimum every Canadian newcomer/settler (i.e. non-First Nations) ought to know about the darkest part of their country's history and present day. I've noticed living in Canada that a typical "well-meaning" reaction to sad news stories about First Nations is a sigh of consternation and a mumble about how these problems just don't seem to have solutions. The logical reaction to having no idea what to do about an ongoing tragedy in your own country is to put some effort into understanding where the problem came from. This book is a great place to start. (Norman Feliks)

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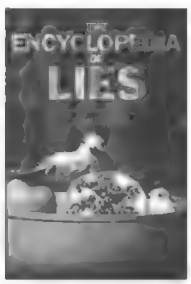

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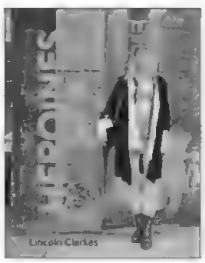

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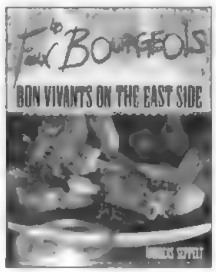

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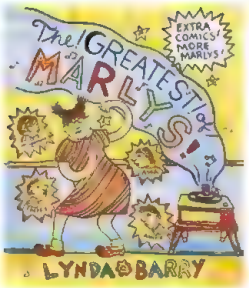
GRAPHIC NOVELS

The Ghosts We Know

Sean Karemaker, 160 pages, Conundrum Press, conundrumpress.com, $20

An impressive debut from Vancouver-based artist Sean Karemaker, *The Ghosts We Know* is an assemblage of autobiographical illustrations, comic vignettes and segmented scroll paintings. Ghosts reappear throughout the shifting, anthropomorphic landscapes in the form of familiar faces, memories and motifs, tying together the artist's childhood and adult life. Karemaker appears in many ways as a ghost himself in these stories, wandering quietly amongst the forests around Chemainus and the manic urban maze of Vancouver, finding company amongst the misfits, hermits and homeless. Throughout the book there is a sustained interest in these cultural outliers and their own subtle yet significant contributions to their communities. In certain images these figures literally meld with and recreate their surroundings, demonstrating a synthesis between subject and environment.

While I thoroughly enjoyed many of the short stories, others seemed to end abruptly, leaving me surprised and wanting more once I turned the page. Despite Karemaker's quiet and understated narrative voice, the book in its entirety can sometimes seem like it's being delivered at breakneck speed, with little empty space on the page to give readers a chance to catch their breath. While the 16 colour pages in the middle of the book are absolutely stunning, the black and white content often seems grey and muddy in comparison, presumably painted in colour and converted later. Minor criticisms aside, *The Ghosts We Know* is a solid introduction to Karemaker's considerable talent, and one that will hopefully spawn further efforts. (Ben O'Neil)



The Greatest of Marlys

Lynda Barry, 248 pgs, Drawn and Quarterly, drawnandquarterly.com, $29.95

There are a million, billion coming-of-age stories out there, but few truly evoke the nostalgia and poignancy of childhood like

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Lynda Barry. I fell in love with her work a while ago when I read *One! Hundred! Demons!* It stuck with me long after I'd read it, so I was super stoked to get a chance to review her latest work *The Greatest of Marlys.*

Marlys is a best-of collection from Barry's long running comic strip *Ernie Pook's Comeek*. The strip follows the adventures of eccentric eight-year-old Marlys Mullen along with her family and friends as they maneuver through the ups and downs of childhood. Each character is spot-on, portraying the bizarre, delightful weirdness of being a kid. Marlys' enthusiasm for life is endearing, and it's rare to see such an accurate and nuanced depiction of an eight-year-old. She and the rest of the charming brood think like kids and act like kids and deal with the realities of life with all the strange complexities of kids. There is no trace of an adult voice in Barry's characters, allowing them to speak directly to a younger audience.

Save for a few, each four-panel strip is a stand alone story. While most stories are about kids being kids, there are a few that deal with tragedies and the hard, cold lessons that can only be learned through experience. Barry doesn't shy away from the sadness of reality and tactfully deals these moments in a sincere and empathic way. While still targeted at children, an older reader will feel the pangs of growing up and connect with the comic.

If you've never picked up anything from Lynda Barry before, give *Marlys* a try. Her amazing doodle-like drawings look like they were ripped from a colouring book and offer a sense of whimsy and insight that I hope will stick with you as it did with me. (Rayna Livingstone-Lang)

Kitaro Meets Nurarihyon

Shigeru Mizuki, 192 pgss,
Drawn and Quarterly,
drawnandquarterly.com, $14.95

After returning from the Second World War, Shigeru Mizuki began re-adapting the Hakaba Kitaro stories popularized in 1920s Japan through the art of paper theatre. Kitaro and his cloaked companion Nezumi Otoko embark on wild adventures plagued by yokai, mysterious beings that appear in

the form of animals, spirits or apparitions. A real-life ghost-hunter and explorer, Mizuki introduced darker themes and characters into his narratives, revolutionizing contemporary manga and inspiring dozens of film, TV and video game adaptations.

The seven stories collected here, originally published between 1967 and 1968, present some truly unpredictable twists, employing time travel, slapstick and strange bodily functions with equal gusto. Kitaro's travels take him to the depths of the ocean, over mountains and even to the brink of hell itself. The yokai found in these places are at times adorable, pathetic and terrifying, preying on travellers who wander off the beaten path. As engaging as the stories are, it is Mizuki's artistic ability which sets this series apart; even a single panel can often contain a wide range of styles and pen strokes, with crude and clumsy characters tumbling through lush, intricately detailed backgrounds. The last story, *Odoro Odoro vs. Vampire*, is chock full of stylistic homages to Golden-Age American horror comics.

Since releasing their first book of Kitaro stories in 2013, Drawn and Quarterly has been in the process of releasing seven more volumes, of which this is the second. These elegant and affordable collections also include historical information on the Kitaro legacy and Mizuki's life, as well as supplementary information on yokai folklore. This series will no doubt stand now as a fitting tribute to the manga mastermind who passed away in November of 2015. (Ben O'Neil)

Mooncop

Tom Gauld, 96 pgs, Drawn and Quarterly, drawnandquarterly.com, $22.95

In his newest graphic novel, Tom Gauld explores loneliness and technologically mediated isolation through the eponymous character of *Mooncop*. Stationed on a dwindling moon colony without "any real crime to deal with," Mooncop — referred to throughout only as "Officer" — meanders through his lonely existence by doing favours for the few colonists left to serve, buying coffee and donuts from a malfunctioning food dispensary, and watching the last of the population shuttle back to Earth.

The drawings are simply drawn and coloured, but hide a much deeper meaning and depth behind the minimalist appearance and storyline. Artfully blending humour, melancholia, and the looming emptiness of space, Gauld captures the inherent yet somehow intangible loneliness that comes with modern modes of connection, mediated by technology. Unlike many modern dystopian science fictions such as *Black Mirror*, *Mooncop* does not stridently force an anti-technological message. Instead, the tale muses on how tender moments will endure as technological dependency and reliance bears out, and wears out, and as progress moves us forward through the modern age. (Nicole Partyka)

Have you heard about the flying canoe?

It may be folklore or it may be real. Either way, the Ministry of Culture wants to control the flying canoe and all of Québec culture. They have a vast surveillance program—agents listen for dissent everywhere.

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The Palace of Champions

by Henriette Valium, 64 pgs, Conundrum Press, conundrumpress.com

Just in time for the disaffected ex-punk rocker on your list comes this homage to, and collection of the work of, the legendary long-standing underground Montreal comic artist Henriette Valium. The work in this volume is a *Where's Waldo?* spew of intricate drawings in which we are challenged to find the anuses, references to 9/11 conspiracy theory, empty beer bottles and Quebecois swear words. Like all of Valium's long-standing work in zines, underground anthologies and even painting from the 80s on up to the present day, the style is instantly recognizable. But the larger format and full colour gloss are new, and give Valium's vintage NSFW hallucinations turned upside and inside out a whole new urgency. Valium is the real deal and his book is a portal into a lost world of anarchist Montrealers living on the mental and material edge in every possible way. That time is over, tabernac, but at least we still have the sole remaining survivor — witness the shame, people, and keep taking your Valium. (Hal Niedzviecki)

Rolling Blackouts: Dispatches From Turkey, Syria, and Iraq

Sarah Glidden, 306 pages, Drawn & Quarterly, drawnandquarterly.com, $29.95

What is journalism?

This is the big question that sent Sarah Glidden to the Middle East with a pair of old friends (also accomplished journalists) who are in search of a story about the Iraq war and the refugees left behind in the dust. The crew also brings with them an Iraq war veteran, wanting to also tell and document the story of a soldier returning to meet some people affected by the war. This graphic novel is told from Glidden's perspective as she follows her friends to interviews with civilians, refugees and experts on the Iraq War and America's massive role in the country's history.

There are moments in the book where you see the warmth of the cast, both journalists and civilians, connecting on a human level. The shared understanding of the importance of family and education plays a big role in most conversations that are had. At other times, there is frustration that comes out when the journalist feels they are being lied to, or are not able to get the subject to open up. Glidden, an outsider, observes these moments and finds her question, "What is journalism?" more complex to navigate than she anticipated.

If I have one grievance with this book, it would be how American the perspective on this war is. Yes, there are many interviews with the civilians of these war torn countries, but the story really focuses on the journalist's own guilt for being part of a country that would allow this war, and asking if they can find any way to make sense of the war, hoping that finding some sort of justification, possibly ending their personal guilt.

As for the illustrations, Glidden's warm monochromatic colour scheme helps the reader focus on the heavy topics of the book. The soft lines allow you to really dive deep into the conversations without losing the humanity that is expressed in the faces. For those interested in our global village and our part in it, even its most difficult places, I highly recommend this book. (Shelby Monita)

Spaniel Rage

Vanessa Davis, 203 pgs, Drawn and Quarterly, drawnandquarterly.com, $19.95

I was afraid Vanessa Davis' graphic novel *Spaniel Rage* was going to be another make-it-in-the-big-city memoir, but thankfully, the perceptions in this work run a little deeper than public transit woes. Davis' illustrated diary is at once too much and too little information, revealing quick bursts of daily life, never lingering, with just the right amount of insight to keep me curious. This lack of context is refreshing and honest, as Davis expertly chooses scenes to show a regular occurrence, brightened with punches of dialogue about lap dances, big butts ("You may not like it, but I look at it and I wanna SQUEEZE IT!"), and seagull attacks.

Self-deprecating and socially awkward, Davis draws her underwear-clad self lounging on her couch, enviously nonchalant- keeping things easy and loose, she includes the same tiny hearts we all drew around our crush's names in grade school, and doesn't mind filling an entire page with a self-portrait, book in hand. Like the text, Davis' drawings are unconfined- there are no panel outlines or inhibitions to be found, giving this work the strange power of making me feel like Davis broke into my apartment and scribbled her life into my personal notebook, just for me. (Grace Bueler)

UUUU

DISSECTIONS

by Jason Elford

TEACHERS AT Jen's high school encourage less participation in the hands-on part during science labs. "More of you will have the opportunity to take notes," which is another way of saying, "The budget bends us over." Even with the gloves and scalpels locked away the school is expected to consume less of everything.

Dirk wants the best marks. Spray-on colognes from grocery stores are his armour against the gas station cigarillos. Brown hair styled into a faux hawk with platinum-frosted tips. He totes a pubescent set of sideburns, shaven in a thin line down either side of the face, running along the jaw where they join with the soul patch under his lip. His lip is constantly puckered forward or sideways from chew tobacco. A wife beater, a dog chain around the neck. He's got on those designer skinny jeans: the ones where you pay extra to get a malnourished worker to bleach and texturize. "Take a picture," he challenges individuals and crowds alike.

Jen is top of her grade-eleven-biology class. She eats lunch in the bathroom. She doesn't talk, and has no real friends or

illustration by Erin Taniguchi

enemies, save for one piece of competition. Dirk is in grade thirteen. There are several non-politically correct words Jen could have used to define him before, but not after she saved his life. It was nothing too heroic, all she did was reach into the pants and grab his phone and call 9-1-1.

After that day a new school policy was implemented: teachers are now officially responsible for the disposal of all organic matter. Disposing of cow hearts and cow eyeballs and fetal pigs is no enjoyable task. In this school, no janitor has ever been made to work days. There isn't even a spot open. There was a nighttime custodian crew consisting of an old man that nobody knew anything about other than the fact that he played jazz records through the school's PA system while he went to work at night. He had been there for thirty years. Always at night. Always jazz. The PA system sounded like a drive-through speaker from the eighties. The old man suddenly stopped coming to work one day and was replaced by someone with a degree in janitorial services.

Dissections would never be removed from the curriculum. Not when there was a slaughterhouse only a few blocks away. Dissections were part of the reason this school's administration could get anyone to attend class, to even be a student. The crucial point here was that after this day, teachers had to dispose of the parts. After this day, a proliferation of short-term biology teachers came with every few waves of hot gore. This school had seen massive turnovers all the time throughout its history: teachers were always called "teacher." They all wanted to know why funding was being atrophied by the government despite the increasing workload. The disgusting workload. Principal must have told them this story to resolve the why. Make life as a temp a little easier.

Picture this. High school. Mid-February. Biology Lab.

To Dirk's credit — however low or high it may be with you after you know what he did — you should at least know that the only excuse he has for being in grade thirteen is that his girlfriend broke up with him a year ago. It caused him stress and depression, and he flunked a few courses. No one took him seriously, so Dirk has to put in some effort if he wants to graduate.

At this school, half of the work is just showing up. That way, even if you draw pictures all over your final exam, you can still get at least fifty percent. Teacher can't fail you if you attend. It's against the law.

Teacher is partially to blame for the antagonism between Jen and Dirk. This temp has a habit of glorifying the students who get the best marks: "Go see Dirk or Jen if you need extra help." Dirk wouldn't help you if your life depended on it, and if anyone wants Jen's help it's always too late. The students that go to this school go to class for attendance, and then they diffuse through the halls. When they look at you in class, they lean over with baggy eyes, or eyes wide-open with white stuff under their nostrils, asking if they can cheat.

In this biology class, in the lab, there's this guy named Arnold who's somewhat autistic. He probably eats a cup of candy for breakfast because the energy clashes with his heavy breathing, his almost muteness. Throw in the stale breath from all those bits of candy between his teeth, and throw in that putrid odor from his overall body (no better or worse than Dirk's cologne), and you have Arnold at face value. He's in Jen's group.

Before scalpel meets heart, teacher takes Jen by the shoulder and says, "Help them" — these misfit others — "dissect the cow heart," and he hands her a pair of gloves. Arnold won't let go of the scalpel. He moves it through the air so fast it's like he's trying to be a pest. Jen looks around. The teacher has already seen the conflict and has his eyebrows raised as if to say, *Get along.*

Arnold cuts where and how he wants. The bi-lateral incision ends up crooked, wonky-looking, like the rim of the Stanley Cup. Everyone else in the group stands around, on their phones, leaning on walls, drifting in and out the door. The chambers of the cow heart are tight. Gloved finger inside left pulmonary artery: warm, soft. The chordae tendineae are the web-like tendons, mostly made up of collagen, they connect the papillary muscles to the tricuspid valve and the mitral valve: without them, the cow wouldn't exist because it wouldn't have a heart that works.

Dirk does all the dissecting for his group and teacher says it's a perfect job. Jen's ears hear atrocious comments such as: "Smart young man;" "nice haircut;" "grade thirteen? Would have never guessed." Jen's clenching her jaw, gesturing with clean gloves, waving this way and that way at where and what to cut, trying to be calm, avoiding Arnold's hack and slash.

Whenever a group finishes they wrap their cow heart in cellophane and place it in the black garbage bag on top of the cart that Dirk offers to transport to the dumpsters. He's picking through the collection, probably comparing each to his own, relishing the victory and the brownie points for disposing the waste. Jen's group is the last to finish. Everyone except Arnold is at a table doing something else. He digs around with the scalpel for a few more minutes, stops, takes the gloves off, sits alone in a corner. She wraps the desecrated organ, places it on the cart. Dirk shoots a smirk and wheels it out the door to the dumpsters. No one from her group helps clean up.

Jen notices the scalpel without its blade. And then she realizes that it's not even a scalpel. It's a piece of metal with wire wrapped around it. That's how cheap this school is. She thinks maybe Arnold misplaced the blade somewhere. She looks around the workstation, the sinks, the floor. Nothing. Dirk has been gone a while. Probably ten minutes over the time that it takes to get to the dumpsters and back. When you're top of the class, you get to know your rivals. You see patterns that always end up informing your intuition. This is one of those times.

Jen slips out of the lab, through the halls, towards the tarmac adjacent to the school parking lot where the dumpsters are. It's not that cold outside. She sees the tracks from the cart in the snow. One set from the door to the dumpsters, and between the tracks are imprints from Dirk's expensive shoes. She closes the door, careful to be quiet. The snow in the immediate proximity of the dumpsters is compact from all the homeless people who scavenge for recyclables. Her footsteps aren't audible as she approaches. When she smells the grocery store cologne she knows it's time to be mega covert.

What's that? Watery, squelchy,

sucking, slurping. She smirks. There's something taboo, yet appealing at the thought of Dirk getting a blowjob behind the dumpsters from a younger student. Jen wants a peek. One quick look, that's all. She smells cologne, stronger now, and with an undertone of saltiness. Dirk is working up a sweat. She looks around the corner.

His back is to the wall of the school, jeans pulled down just past his knees, legs spread apart. The open zipper and fabric are stretched around his legs. She can't see his underwear because they're covered beneath several layers of paper towel that absorb the blood and slime coming from the cow heart in his hands that he's pumping up and down over his erect penis, thrusting with his hips. Beside his foot is a crusty bottle of lube. Bits of hair stuck to the sticker remnants, dirt all over. From her vantage point, Jen cannot tell if there's a condom involved, but Dirk certainly isn't wearing gloves. His head is tilted back, eyes closed as he works his hips and arms, being as quiet and as forceful as possible. Put on a metronome: 120 beats per minute (or two per second): each beat is a thrust into or through the bicuspid valve, aorta, some chamber or another of this cow heart. He's thoroughly enjoying it, picking up speed, squeezing tighter. He opens his eyes, snorts loose mucus to the back of his nostrils, hacks phlegm and snot into his mouth, and spits a long trail of tobacco-slime into an orifice. He's too lazy to reach for the lube.

The pumping gets faster and faster, and then he lurches. His voice is very much animal: "Euaaah!" reaching the alto end; it's almost like he's in pain as he squeezes, wiggling, thrusting. Dirk wiggles his face from side-to-side with eyes closed, mouth open, lips fluttering with bits of spittle flickering everywhere. The spasm subsides. A trickle of semen comes out of the left pulmonary artery, mixes with the blood-lube-pus-snot-tobacco conglomeration on the paper towel over his pants. Looks like he forewent the condom. For no reason whatsoever the end of *Animal Farm* comes to mind.

Jen turns around, mindful not to make any noise. Takes one step, two, three. Makes a solemn oath to never come near this spot again. To go home after school and erase those images: down a bottle of spirits and take bong hits until she passes out. On her fourth fastidious step she hears another sound. Cursing herself, she walks back, looks again.

Dirk is in unmistakable agony. A line of sweat is trickling from his forehead, down the sideburns. He's peeling pieces of cow heart away from his crotch, dropping them to the snow beside the bottle. She doesn't understand why he doesn't pull out. More blood comes from inside the cow heart, drips from the ventricles. Piece by piece Dirk takes it apart until he's standing there with his pants down, the bottom-front of his wife beater stained like the paper towel, albeit less saturated.

The mystery of the missing scalpel blade has been solved. Until a minute ago it was embedded somewhere in that cow heart. It's never a smart idea to dispose of anything with a sharp metal edge anywhere except in a used sharps container. Arnold might not have noticed or cared like most people would who aren't disabled and wouldn't ever think this could happen. Jen can't decide if Dirk is mentally ill, or if he smoked crack before dropping his drawers, or if he was just horny as hell, or if he felt the need to trump her so strongly that he had to engage in some symbolism to relish the victory—some kind of morbid self-affirmation, or maybe a bit of all, some, or none of the above. It doesn't matter. Semantics are irrelevant because Dirk has a razor blade embedded in his erect penis at about a forty-five-degree angle, about an inch below the head. He must have clutched that cow heart as hard as a football in those final moments before, during, and after the climax when the blade moved through dead flesh into the living.

There's blood and bits of organ everywhere. Dirk is in shock. Jen knows if he removes the blade he might bleed to death. She walks into his personal space. She pulls the paper towel away, sticks her hand in his jeans, grabs his phone, dials 9-1-1. With the speakerphone on, she places it on the ground, steps back two paces, looks over her shoulder, thinking, *I don't want to be caught here right now*! She wipes the residual blood from her hand onto fresh snow. Dirk snaps out of his fugue state when he hears the operator going "Hello? Hello?" Jen leaves. Everyone hears the ambulance come into the parking lot.

No one ever knew that Jen saved Dirk. She never heard a thank-you, but then again, she doesn't even know if he was conscious of her presence, or if he even knew who she was. The teachers felt relatively safe discussing the incident in subtle terms and soft voices, knowing that students would never guess the subject.

"Do you think it was premeditated?"

"Where else did the bottle come from?"

"He was lucky?"

"Depends on what you mean by *lucky*."

"Talk about a *broken heart*."

It's an incident that escapes language because it's impossible to be serious about it without laughing, without causing serious damage to your tongue in the presence of the parents of the "victim." Dirk refused to talk about it. It should be noted that several temps lost their jobs for unscheduled visits to the doctor for oral injuries. It wasn't until the bottle of lube was discovered that people started to have suspicions of something uncategorizable. All the cow parts and the blade made no sense to the paramedics.

Proliferations of teachers were ordered by threat of termination to try their best to somehow explain to Dirk's parents what their son could not. Even if it was all just speculation. That razor blade had to get in there somehow. You have to bite your tongue pretty hard sometimes when you speculate. Jen was already unpopular so she didn't care that she was the only one in the class that laughed aside from the guy tripping on mushrooms. As for Dirk, he graduated grade thirteen in a hospital bed. No pictures, please.

Jason Elford writes short fiction, poems, and novels. His work has appeared in *Litbreak*, *Foliate Oak*, *The Worcester Journal*, *The Machinery*, and *STOPGap*. He lives in Calgary, Alberta.

GIRL

By Amanda McQueen

I FELL WHEN I was a kid. Bad fall. I don't know how old I was. Whatever year Mark McKinney left SNL. My mom made me a popsicle with stuff from the garden floating in it. I had it in my mouth when I fell. Nine stitches on the roof of my mouth. I don't know how old I was. I'll have to ask my parents if I get home.

I feel the scar on the roof of my mouth with my tongue, imagining the popsicle stick traveling up through my brain. I played that over and over in my head in the hospital. The nurse — Stu — told me not to think about what could have happened. It's enough to think about what did happen.

My toes are freezing. I know they won't drop off the ends of my feet because I've been through the night already, twice. Faith. My little fire's still doing okay, it was acting like a bitch who needs a protein bar earlier. Sun will come up in about an hour. I've been here for three days, hugged a tree like the cartoon bear said to do if I ever got separated from my parents in the woods. I sleep during the daytime. Still don't trust the night.

illustration by Erin Taniguchi

I fell two days ago. Bad fall. Hit my head on a tree root. Quite a bit of blood but when I woke up the second time it seemed better. I probably look like a human beet. Every goddamn thing reminds me of goddamn macaroni out here. I feel drunk. I need to eat. I'm not touching the red berries. I've read that book.

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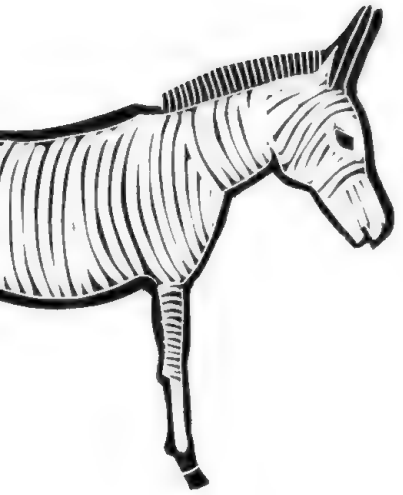

Four days ago, I had my hand on a dog. I was petting a domesticated animal, four days ago. I was really cold — but a privileged cold. The clean drinking water and steady job kind of cold. I had a polar fleece in my bag, but was too lazy to get it out. Same reason I'd throw a cold hot dog on a plate with some processed cheese instead of boiling lentils for lunch. I don't even know if I ever did that. My mind is getting stranger.

I'd never been on a motorcycle. A guy named Tara had one, he lived down the street from Mike's cottage. We were just hanging out, hamburgers and ketchup, sunshine and volleyballs. Tara came over. He brought hard lemonade, which should have been my first hint that things were going south in my life. A guy named Tara with a whole bunch of hard lemonade in his arms, waving giddily. My first thought should not have been "competence".

Tara's motorcycle was green. I thought it was cool. I asked for a ride. We went for an early morning one, didn't wake anybody up. I don't know why. It's inconvenient that I went missing after doing something weird and not telling anybody.

It was really just as much fun as I ever thought it would be — for the first ten minutes. Wind in my hair, hog under my butt, all of that. We passed a caravan on our ride. I gave the finger to the family of four inside. I don't know why I did that. Maybe my mind was always this strange. No respect for the kids.

And then...I don't know. I know we were in an accident, and I know that no one else was involved. I woke up on the shoulder, hog in the ditch. Tara gone. I guess he walked off, maybe he's okay right now — maybe not. I sat for a long time, sitting up with my legs stretched in front of me, a bit slumped — like a doll. Just thinking and waiting. I thought someone would come by, or Tara would come back or...I don't know. A lot of my memories of why I'm here involve the words "I don't know". But I don't need to know — I need to get home. I'm here now, so I need to get home and then I need to punch Tara in the throat. I hope he's okay.

Eventually I decided I was alone and okay to walk. There were just woods, all around — trees and birds. I walked straight into the woods. I can't believe I did that. I remember being very, very scared on that dirt road. That has to be part of it. Too many voices telling me some weird guy would come along and I wouldn't have any trees to hide behind out there on the road. Had to find a busier road, go through the woods and out the other side, listening for cars and highway sounds. It's safer.

I have the dumbest lost-in-the-woods story ever. Walked myself into a party for one under the maples. I wasn't even following a shiny butterfly. Now I have to survive. If I don't survive, the last human contact I had besides Tara was flipping the bird to a singalong-checker-champ-adventure-family in a minivan. That's not bad I guess.

***

People used to say I looked like Jackie O, but that ended around 5th grade. Shit started to go down inside and I got big. I've never met a girl as big as me. I look like I came out of a horse via C-section and was raised by lumberjacks. My back is broad and high, my wide shoulders and convenient fat deposits give the illusion of beefy biceps. I can't shake my wide stance — I get clipped all the time in bars for being in the way. I don't care, though. I can take the heat — people see power in me.

I didn't fall down so much once my feet grew, spreading out on the earth so I could look after myself. I've never been to a gym in my life. I can already do anything. In high school I'd run through the playground with my friends on my shoulders, one on each. Never missing a beat, I'd spin and toss them. I was an idiot, but at least I donated my strength towards noble causes.

I wonder how big a bear is. I've never seen one, but I'm guessing I will now. I can't remember whether they climb trees or not. Maybe I could get them all to start calling me Goldilocks, little icebreaker. We could work our way up to a relationship where I can run around with them on my shoulders. Or vice-versa. I wouldn't mind a turn, being given a ride. Tara didn't do the best job. Tara makes me think of macaroni.

***

The sun comes up and I start my morning routine of sucking dew off leaves. I know what poison ivy looks like but that's about it — so let's hope she doesn't have any asshole cousins hanging around. Don't want the woods to give me a souvenir mouth rash. My head pounds and I'm angry at every single thought I ever had linking wilderness survival to excitement. Adventure. Thrill. That's not what it is. No heroic stabbing of rabbits, skinny dipping in beautiful ponds. There's nothing. Not even sound. It's so quiet. Suck, suck, suck. This sucks. Sucking water sucks. Tara sucks. That cat sucks. That cat.

No. No, no, no, no. There's a cat. He's little but that isn't good. What's a cougar? Oh my god. It's not a cougar. Cougars are the big ones. It's looking at me. What do I do. Saw a brochure once. Make yourself big, undo your windbreaker and spread it out. Sing "Happy Birthday". I can't I can't

I can't. So skinny. Is it a bobcat? There's no snow. Do they like snow? Always on snow in the pictures.

A deer comes up behind the cat — holy shit — I hope he eats the deer. I hope he eats the deer. The deer nuzzles him. It's a baby deer. A fawn? Not a wildcat. Okay. Okay. It's a deer, not a cat. I pass out.

When I wake up my hands are clasped close to my chest. I fell asleep in prayer or my palms got cold while I was out. No, I blacked out. Thought I was dying but it was just a little deer. Bambi panic. I start laughing uncontrollably. The word "donkey" repeats over and over in my head. This convinces me that the food situation is now an emergency. Giggling like a vacationing tooth fairy, I prance among the trees and bushes, searching for something familiar and food-like.

I remember that I ate worms as a child. This comforts me. I'll dig for those when I have more strength. Do worms like the woods? They might taste a bit like macaroni.

***

I once got a phone call from an estranged uncle. He and my mother used to be inseparable, but he gave his adopted kid up for adoption again and things got messy. Troubled kid, dickhead. Only time I'd ever seen her hang up on someone. Barry called me when I was away at a Spanish immersion program. He told me his car had broken down and he needed my mom's address. He asked me if I remembered the band-aid commercial with the kid in the glasses. I did. It made me sad.

***

"WHOA NANCY!", a voice booms through the woods. I have a fistful of purple berries. Blueberries. A Canadian treasure. It takes me two minutes of euphoria, fear and acute listening to realize it was my own voice yelling, in celebration of my foraged treats. Who the fuck is Nancy? I cram berries into my mouth — then remember that I need to take it slow. Tummy ache, puke, dehydrie-no-survivie.

Gotta dig for worms.

***

I've been singing "Row Your Boat" and building a phallic object out of dirt. For how long, I don't know. Not more than 2 hours but the light is fading. I've lost my mind. No worms have turned up, but who knows what I've been doing really. My knuckles are a bit bloody. Must have been really going at it.

I can't stop thinking about how magnificent my grandmother is.

***

I'm doing standup for a caterpillar. He loves me. I get an urge to run, so I kiss him on the back, remind him to tip his server, and take off along the leafy terrain. I'll probably fall and break my ankle and die or...

Then, I see it: a fucking orange. There's a fucking orange on the ground, in the middle of the Canadian wilderness. Bright, bright orange. Not rotten. Not the middle. Wilderness, but not the middle. Can't be, must not be alone. People. Oh my god — and I pass out.

***

Not much has changed since, but I like pie more and I want to be a cop.

I came to in the evening when the orange had faded in the light. I crawled towards a faint glow and onto a campsite. Waterproof, battery-operated lamp on a picnic table. Night light for the younger child. The family there saved my life, but first pointed out to me that my pants were gone. I have no recollection of when I took them off, but a hunch as to why. After Winnie-the-Pooh-ing myself into future therapy sessions of two young children, their parents drove me to the park office.

I borrowed the woman's pajama bottoms. They had jellybean-coloured footprints all over them. Discount pair. Just for camping. Why did I need to know that? She told me anyway, self-conscious as if she weren't in a surreal situation. I sucked on a juice box and ate cold hot dogs on the back seat of their car. They apologized that it was all they had, as if they weren't angels. They live in Saint Lambert, and we still email a bit.

I send them macaroni sometimes. I haven't told them why.

I'm not going to.

Amanda McQueen is a writer and comedian who lives in Montreal, Quebec.

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WHAT'S REALLY IN THE MIND OF A ZINEMAKER?

The Story Swallowers

by Star

Ed Note: The following piece is an excerpt from Everything + All At Once, a zine by Toronto-based author and illustrator Markus "Star" Harwood-Jones. The zine is a preview of their upcoming novel. We loved the way The Story Swallowers *warmly and kindly advises queer creators on how to protect their work.*

MY DEAR BABY QUEER, my training-wheel trans. You, born of secrets, of seasons, of hidden trembling hands. I have a secret for you.

A lesson I've learned a thousand times, one you likely already know. Curl 'round, huddle close for warmth, as even now, beyond the reflection of our windowpane, there are eyes that glint in our firelight. They sniff us out, size us up, deciding who might best fulfill their appetite. My secret for you, oh you, born of cold dew after springtime showers, you with will steadfast and tender desires, know this: there are those in this world who wish to swallow your stories.

On the prowl, sniffing out your innocence, and your tragedy, they will come for you first and, then, your chosen families. They will come famished, sharp smiles laced with promises and sometimes treats. *It's all for your benefit,* a swallower might whisper, *just unload your heavy stories between my teeth.* If they've got you cornered, listen closely, hear the notes in between. If you dare come closer, ask a question, make an offer, see what you can glean. But be warned, oh young one, burst forth in the song of summer sunbeams, of long grass melodies, know that once they have your scent, they'll come again, ever hungry.

Among those who do the living, who make the stories that satiate, most of us try to avoid the swallowers, but some learn to negotiate. Sometimes, our stories just escape, other times we might think it necessary to cough up our knowledge and educate. Oh babe, born of warm coats and rolling auburn leaves, how rare and sweet this trade can seem can seem when we've been famished, parched to the point that we'll accept anything.

Perhaps you've have done this dance before, gotten used to feeding the wolves with scraps of your flesh to keep the other carnivores at bay. Trading bits of your spirit so you might see a better day. Oh child, of winter's coldest night, born of darkness and shadow, one who learned to breathe in the snow, you know which parts you can sacrifice long enough to make your way home. You born of bargains, borders, and bureaucracy, you will learn to sell your scars, to give nothing for free.

They will ask about your loved ones, the names you thought were dead, the secrets of your nudity, the worries in your head. They will slip upon your shoulder, voices like the sound of many wings. Like a mosquito slurping up their crimson soup, they will suck up every drop you sing. Like a roast over a fire, humming like a hive, once your story's been digested they excrete the remains, birthing something not quite alive. Sold as a feast, to the critters and famished foragers, anxious for a piece. In that pit, of wiggling worms and pecking birds, muddled, messy, meshed together in a paste, the smell gets caught up in your mouth so even you can get a taste.

You may grow tired and deign to slumber, dreaming of times before, when our stories were just for each other. Let yourself lie down, in a field under a half moon; bathe in the reflections of our ancestors. Know that they will ask for our stories but never for our lessons. They ask for our tragedies but never our solutions. They will barter for your trust, only to break it. The story swallowers feed themselves first, of this you can't forget. And you, if you're anything like me, and I'm not sure that you are, you will learn to ask for the money up front. You will bargain and battle and breathe long enough to tell your own stories, in the end.

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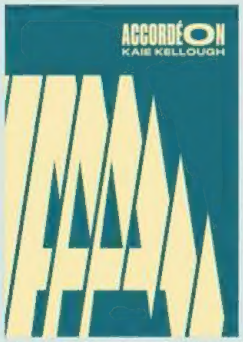

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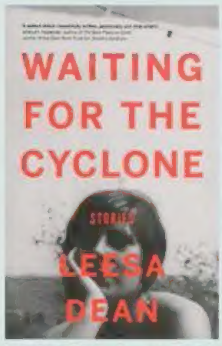

"Subversive, illicit . . ."
—*Quill & Quire*

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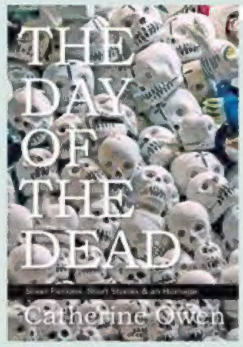

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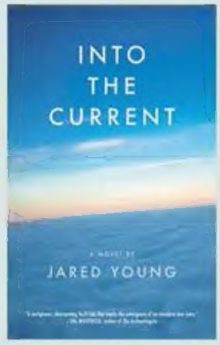
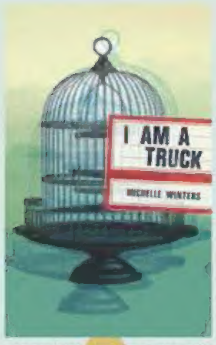


Sex. Death. Regret. If only that was the worst of it.

GOOSE LANE EDITIONS | FICTION



A novel about a man, a woman, and their Chevrolet dealer.

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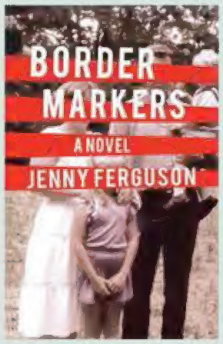
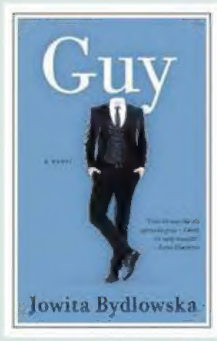


A teen's death fractures a family.

NEWEST PRESS | FICTION



Darkly funny and utterly offensive.

WOLSAK & WYNN | FICTION

VISTAS OF LITERATURE

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SO DAVID TRIUMPHED OVER THE PHILISTINE WITH A SLING AND A STONE; WITHOUT A SWORD IN HIS HAND HE STRUCK DOWN THE PHILISTINE AND KILLED HIM.
The more I worry
I may have...
...melt the cooling system....
WHAT?
This entire section is sparking...
and leaking...
BY THE WAY, YOU'RE NOT THE FIRST PRESIDENT TO VISIT THIS FACILITY. THE HISTORY OF THIS PLACE GOES ALL THE WAY BACK TO BEFORE JFK'S TIME. IT WAS ORIGINALLY BUILT DURING THE EARLY DAYS OF THE COLD WAR AS A FALLOUT. BUT IT'S PURPOSE SINCE THEN HAS CHANGED A BIT.

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